FIFTEEN
SERMONS
Preached at the
ROLLS CHAPEL,

To which are added,

SIX SERMONS
Preached on Public Occasions.

By JOSEPH BUTLER, LL.D.
Late Lord Biſhop of Bristol.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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SERMONS

Preached at the

ROLLS CHAPEL,

ETC.

SERMON XI.

Upon the Love of our Neighbour.

Preached on Advent Sunday.

ROM. xiii. 9.

And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf.

IT is commonly obſerved, that there is a diſpoſition in men to complain of the vitiouſneſs and corruption of the age in which they live, as greater than that of former ones; which is uſually followed with this further obſervation, that mankind has been in that reſpect much the ſame in all times. Now not to

determine whether this laſt be not contradicted by the accounts of hiſtory; thus much can ſcarce be doubted, that vice and folly takes different turns, and ſome particular kinds of it are more open and avowed in ſome ages than in others: and, I ſuppoſe, it may be ſpoken of as very much the diſtinction of the preſent, to profeſs a contracted ſpirit, and greater regards to ſelf-intereſt, than appears to have been done formerly. Upon this account it ſeems worth while to inquire, whether private intereſt is likely to be promoted in proportion to the degree in which ſelf-love engroſſes us, and prevails over all other principles; or, whether the contracted affection may not poſſibly be ſo prevalent as to diſappoint itſelf, and even contradict its own end, private good.

And ſince further, there is generally thought to be ſome peculiar kind of contrariety between ſelf-love and the love of our neighbour, between the purſuit of public and of private good; inſomuch that when you are recommending one of theſe, you are ſuppoſed to be ſpeaking againſt the other; and from hence ariſes a ſecret prejudice againſt, and frequently open

ſcorn of all talk of public ſpirit, and real good-will to our fellow-creatures; it will be neceſſary to inquire, what reſpect benevolence hath to ſelf-love, and the purſuit of private intereſt, to the purſuit of public: or whether there be any thing of that peculiar inconſiſtence and contrariety between them, over and above what there is between ſelf-love and other paſſions and particular affections, and their reſpective purſuits.

These inquiries, it is hoped, may be favourably attended to: for there ſhall be all poſſible conceſſions made to the favourite paſſion, which hath ſo much allowed to it, and whoſe cauſe is ſo univerſally pleaded: it ſhall be treated with the utmoſt tenderneſs, and concern for its intereſts.

In order to this, as well as to determine the forementioned queſtions, it will be neceſſary to conſider the nature, the object and end of that ſelf-love, as diſtinguiſhed from other principles or affections in the mind, and their reſpective objects.

Every man hath a general deſire of his own happineſs; and likewiſe a variety of particular

affections, paſſions and appetites to particular external objects. The former proceeds from, or is ſelf-love; and ſeems inſeparable from all ſenſible creatures, who can reflect upon themſelves and their own intereſt or happineſs, ſo as to have that intereſt an object to their minds: what is to be ſaid of the latter is, that they proceed from, or together make up that particular nature, according to which man is made. The object the former purſues is ſomewhat internal, our own happineſs, enjoyment, ſatisfaction; whether we have, or have not a diſtinct particular perception what it is, or wherein it conſiſts: the objects of the latter are this or that particular external thing, which the affections tend towards, and of which it hath always a particular idea or perception. The principle we call ſelf-love never ſeeks any thing external for the ſake of the thing, but only as a means of happineſs or good: particular affections reſt in the external things themſelves. One belongs to man as a reaſonable creature reflecting upon his own intereſt or happineſs. The other, though quite diſtinct from reaſon, are as much a part of human nature.

THAT all particular appetites and paſſions are towards external things themſelves, diſtinct from the pleaſure ariſing from them, is manifeſted from hence; that there could not be this pleaſure, were it not for that prior ſuitableneſs between the object and the paſſion: there could be no enjoyment or delight from one thing more than another, from eating food more than from ſwallowing a ſtone, if there were not an affection or appetite to one thing more than another.

EVERY particular affection, even the love of our neighbour, is as really our own affection, as ſelf-love; and the pleaſure ariſing from its gratification is as much my own pleaſure, as the pleaſure ſelf-love would have, from knowing I myſelf ſhould be happy ſome time hence, would be my own pleaſure. And if, becauſe every particular affection is a man's own, and the pleaſure ariſing from its gratification his own pleaſure, or pleaſure to himſelf, ſuch particular affection muſt be called ſelf-love; according to this way of ſpeaking, no creature whatever can poſſibly act but merely from ſelf-love; and every action and

every affection whatever is to be reſolved up into this one principle. But then this is not the language of mankind: or if it were, we ſhould want words to expreſs the difference, between the principle of an action, proceeding from cool conſideration that it will be to my own advantage; and an action, ſuppoſe of revenge, or of friendſhip, by which a man runs upon certain ruin, to do evil or good to another. It is manifeſt the principles of theſe actions are totally different, and ſo want different words to be diſtinguiſhed by: all that they agree in is, that they both proceed from, and are done to gratify an inclination in a man's ſelf. But the principle or inclination in one caſe is ſelf-love; in the other, hatred or love of another. There is then a diſtinction between the cool principle of ſelf-love, or general deſire of our own happineſs, as one part of our nature, and one principle of action; and the particular affections towards particular external objects, as another part of our nature, and another principle of action. How much ſoever therefor is to be allowed for ſelf-love, yet it cannot be allowed to be the whole of our in-

ward conſtitution; becauſe you ſee, there are other parts or principles which come into it.

FURTHER, private happineſs or good is all which ſelf can make us deſire, or be concerned about: in having this conſiſts its gratification: it is an affection to ourſelves; a regard to our own intereſt, happineſs and private good: and in the proportion a man hath this, he is intereſted, or a lover of himſelf. Let this be kept in mind; becauſe there is commonly, as I ſhall preſently have occaſion to obſerve, another ſenſe put upon theſe words. On the other hand, particular affections tend towards particular external things: theſe are their objects: having theſe is their end: in this conſiſts their gratification: no matter whether it be, or be not, upon the whole, our intereſt or happineſs. An action done from the former of theſe principles is called an intereſted action. An action proceeding from any of the latter has its denomination of paſſionate, ambitious, friendly, revengeful, or any other, from the particular appetite or affection from which it proceeds. Thus ſelf-love as one part of hu-

man nature, and the ſeveral particular principles as the other part, are, themſelves, their objects and ends, ſtated and ſhewn.

FROM hence it will be eaſy to ſee, how far, and in what ways, each of theſe can contribute and be ſubſervient to the private good of the individual. Happineſs does not conſiſt in ſelf-love. The deſire of happineſs is no more the thing itſelf, than the deſire of riches is the poſſeſſion or enjoyment of them. People may love themſelves with the moſt entire and unbounded affection, and yet be extremely miſerable. Neither can ſelf-love any way help them out, but by ſetting them on work to get rid of the cauſes of their miſery, to gain or make uſe of thoſe objects which are by nature adapted to afford ſatisfaction. Happineſs or ſatisfaction conſiſts only in the enjoyment of thoſe objects which are by nature ſuited to our ſeveral particular appetites, paſſions and affections. So that if ſelf-love wholly engroſſes us, and leaves no room for any other principle, there can be abſolutely no ſuch thing at all as happineſs, or enjoyment of any kind whatever; ſince happineſs conſiſts in the gratification of

particular paſſions, which ſuppoſes the having of them. Self-love then does not conſtitute this or that to be our intereſt or good; but, our intereſt or good being conſtituted by nature and ſuppoſed, ſelf-love only puts us upon obtaining and ſecuring it. Therefor, if it be poſſible, that ſelf-love may prevail and exert itſelf in a degree or manner which is not ſubſervient to this end; then it will not follow, that our intereſt will be promoted in proportion to the degree in which that principle engroſſes us, and prevails over others. Nay further, the private and contracted affection, when it is not ſubſervient to this end private good; may, for any thing that appears, have a direct contrary tendency and effect. And if we will conſider the matter, we ſhall ſee that it often really has. Diſengagement is abſolutely neceſſary to enjoyment: and a perſon may have ſo ſteady and fixed an eye upon his own intereſt, whatever he places it in, as may hinder him from attending to many gratifications within his reach, which others have their minds free and open to. Over-fondneſs for a child is not generally thought to be for its

advantage: and, if there be any gueſs to be made from appearances, ſurely that character we call ſelfiſh is not the moſt promiſing for happineſs. Such a temper may plainly be and exert itſelf in a degree and manner which may give unneceſſary and uſeleſs ſolicitude and anxiety, in a degree and manner which may prevent obtaining the means and materials of enjoyment, as well as the making uſe of them. Immoderate ſelf-love does very ill conſult its own intereſt: and, how much ſoever a paradox it may appear, it is certainly true, that even from ſelf-love we ſhould endeavour to get over all inordinate regard to, and conſideration of ourſelves. Every one of our paſſions and affections hath its natural ſtint and bound, which may eaſily be exceeded; whereas our enjoyments can poſſibly be but in a determinate meaſure and degree. Therefor ſuch exceſs of the affection, ſince it cannot procure any enjoyment, muſt in all caſes be uſeleſs; but is generally attended with inconveniences, and often is downright pain and miſery. This holds as much with regard to ſelf-love as to all other affections. The natural degree of it, ſo far as it

ſets us on work to gain and make uſe of the materials of ſatisfaction, may be to our real advantage; but beyond or beſides this, it is in ſeveral reſpects an inconvenience and diſadvantage. Thus it appears, that private intereſt is ſo far from being likely to be promoted in proportion to the degree in which ſelf-love engroſſes us, and prevails over all other principles; that the contracted affection may be ſo prevalent as to diſappoint itſelf, and even contradict its own end, private good.

" But who, except the moſt ſordidly co-
" vetous, ever thought there was any rival-
" ſhip between the love of greatneſs, honour,
" power, or between ſenſual appetites, and
" ſelf-love? No, there is a perfect harmony
" between them. It is by means of theſe par-
" ticular appetites and affections that ſelf-love
" is gratified in enjoyment, happineſs and ſa-
" tisfaction. The competition and rivalſhip is
" between ſelf-love and the love of our neigh-
" bour: that affection which leads us out of
" ourſelves, makes us regardleſs of our own
" intereſt, and ſubſtitute that of another in
" its ſtead." Whether then there be any pe-

culiar competition and contrariety in this caſe, ſhall now be conſidered.

SELF-LOVE and intereſtedneſs was ſtated to conſiſt in or be an affection to ourſelves, a regard to our own private good: it is therefor diſtinct from benevolence, which is an affection to the good of our fellow-creatures. But that benevolence is diſtinct from, that is, not the ſame thing with ſelf-love, is no reaſon for its being looked upon with any peculiar ſuſpicion; becauſe every principle whatever, by means of which ſelf-love is gratified, is diſtinct from it: and all things which are diſtinct from each other, are equally ſo. A man has an affection or averſion to another: that one of theſe tends to and is gratified by doing good, that the other tends to and is gratified by doing harm, does not in the leaſt alter the reſpect which either one or the other of theſe inward feelings has to ſelf-love. We uſe the word *property* ſo as to exclude any other perſons having an intereſt in that of which we ſay a particular man has the property. And we often uſe the word *ſelfiſh* ſo as to exclude in the ſame manner all regards to the good of others. But the caſes

are not parallel: for though that excluſion is really part of the idea of property; yet ſuch poſitive excluſion, or bringing this diſregard to the good of others into the idea, or ſelf-love, is in reality adding to the idea of changing it from what it was before ſtated to conſiſt in, namely, in an affection to ourſelves*. This being the whole idea of ſelf-love, it can no otherwiſe exclude good-will or love of others, than merely by not including it, no otherwiſe, than it excludes love of arts or reputation, or of any thing elſe. Neither on the other hand does benevolence, any more than love of arts or of reputation, exclude ſelf-love. Love of our neighbour then has juſt the ſame reſpect to, is no more diſtant from ſelf-love, than hatred of our neighbour, or than love and hatred of any thing elſe. Thus the principles from which men ruſh upon certain ruin for the deſtruction of an enemy, and for the preſervation of a friend, have the ſame reſpect to the private affection, and are equally intereſted, or equally diſintereſted: and it is of no avail, whether they are ſaid to be one or the other. There-

* Page 9.

for to thoſe who are ſhocked to hear virtue ſpoken of as diſintereſted, it may be allowed, that it is indeed abſurd to ſpeak thus of it; unleſs hatred, ſeveral particular inſtances of vice, and all the common affections and averſions in mankind, are acknowleged to be diſintereſted too. Is there any leſs inconſiſtence, between the love of inanimate things, or of creatures meerly ſenſitive, and ſelf-love; than between ſelf-love, and the love of our neighbour? Is deſire of and delight in the happineſs of another any more a diminution of ſelf-love, than deſire of and delight in the eſteem of another? They do both equally deſire of and delight in ſomewhat external to ourſelves: either both or neither are ſo. The object of ſelf-love is expreſſed in the term, ſelf: and every appetite of ſenſe, and every particular affection of the heart, are equally intereſted or diſintereſted, becauſe the objects of them all are equally ſelf or ſomewhat elſe. Whatever ridicule therefor the mention of a diſintereſted principle or action may be ſuppoſed to lie open to, muſt, upon the matter being thus ſtated, relate to ambition, and every appetite and particular affecti-

on, as much as to benevolence. And indeed all the ridicule, and all the grave perplexity, of which this ſubject hath had its full ſhare, is merely from words. The moſt intelligible way of ſpeaking of it ſeems to be this: that ſelf-love, and the actions done in conſequence of it (for theſe will preſently appear to be the ſame as to this queſtion) are intereſted; objects, and the actions done in conſequence of thoſe affections, are not ſo. But every one is at liberty to uſe words as he pleaſes. All that is here inſiſted upon is, that ambition, revenge, benevolence, all particular paſſions whatever, and the actions they produce, are equally intereſted and diſintereſted.

Thus it appears that there is no peculiar contrariety between ſelf-love and benevolence; no greater competition between theſe, than between any other particular affections and ſelf-love. This relates to the affections themſelves. Let us now ſee whether there be any peculiar contrariety between the reſpective courſes of life which theſe affections lead to; whether there be any greater competition between the purſuit of private and of public good,

than between any other particular purſuits and that of private good.

THERE ſeems no other reaſon to ſuſpect that there is any ſuch peculiar contrariety, but only that the courſe of action which benevolence leads to, has a more direct tendency to promote the good of others, than that courſe of action which love of reputation, ſuppoſe, or any other particular affection leads to. But that any affection tends to the happineſs of another, does not hinder its tending to one's own happineſs too. That others enjoy the benefit of the air and the light of the ſun, does not hinder but that theſe are as much one's own private advantage now, as they would be if we had the property of them excluſive of all others. So a purſuit which tends to promote the good of another, yet may have as great tendency to promote private intereſt, as a purſuit which does not tend to the good of another at all, or which is miſchievous to him. All particular affections whatever, reſentment, benevolence, love of arts, equally lead to a courſe of action for their own gratification, that is, the gratification of ourſelves; and the

gratification of each gives delight: ſo far then it is manifeſt they have all the ſame reſpect to private intereſt. Now take into conſideration further concerning theſe three purſuits, that the end of the firſt is the harm, of the ſecond, the good of another, of the laſt, ſomewhat indifferent: and is there any neceſſity, that theſe additional conſiderations ſhould alter the reſpect, which we before ſaw theſe three purſuits had to private intereſt; or render any one of them leſs conducive to it, that any other? Thus one man's affection is to honour as his end; in order to obtain which, he thinks no pains too great. Suppoſe another with ſuch a ſingularity of mind, as to have the ſame affection to public good as his end, which he endeavours with the ſame labour to obtain. In caſe of ſucceſs, ſurely the man of benevolence hath as great enjoyment as the man of ambition; they both equally having the end their affections, in the ſame degree, tended to: but in caſe of diſappointment, the benevolent man has clearly the advantage; ſince endeavouring to do good, conſidered as a virtuous purſuit, is gratified

by its own conſciouſneſs, that is, is in a degree its own reward.

And as to theſe two, or benevolence and any other particular paſſions whatever, conſidered in a further view, as forming a general temper, which more or leſs diſpoſes us for enjoyment of all the common bleſſings of life, diſtinct from their own gratification: is benevolence leſs the temper of tranquillity and freedom than ambition or covetouſneſs? Does the benevolent man appear leſs eaſy with himſelf, from his love to his neighbour? Does he leſs reliſh his being? Is there any peculiar gloom ſeated on his face? Is his mind leſs open to entertainment, to any particular gratification? Nothing is more manifeſt, than that being in good-humour, which is benevolence whilſt it laſts, is itſelf the temper of ſatisfaction and enjoyment.

Suppose then a man ſitting down to conſider how he might become moſt eaſy to himſelf, and attain the greateſt pleaſure he could; all that which is his real natural happineſs. This can only conſiſt in the enjoyment of thoſe objects, which are by nature adapted to our ſe-

veral faculties. Theſe particular enjoyments make up the ſum total of our happineſs: and they are ſuppoſed to ariſe from riches, honours, and the gratification of ſenſual appetites: be it ſo: yet none profeſs themſelves ſo compleatly happy in theſe enjoyments, but that there is room left in the mind for others, if they were preſented to them: nay, theſe, as much as they engage us, are not thought ſo high, but that human nature is capable even of greater. Now there have been perſons in all ages, who have profeſſed, that they found ſatisfaction in the exerciſe of charity, in the love of their neighbour, in endeavouring to promote the happineſs of all they had to do with, and in the purſuit of what is juſt and right and good, as the general bent of their mind, and end of their life; and that doing an action of baſeneſs or cruelty would be as great violence to their ſelf, as much breaking in upon their nature, as any external force. Perſons of this character would add, if they might be heard, that they conſider themſelves as acting in the view of an infinite Being, who is in a much higher ſenſe the object of reverence and of love,

than all the world beſides; and therefor they could have no more enjoyment from a wicked action done under his eye, than the perſons to whom they are making their apology could, if all mankind were the ſpectators of it; and that the ſatisfaction of approving themſelves to his unerring judgment, to whom they thus refer all their actions, is a more continued ſettled ſatisfaction than any this world can afford; as alſo that they have, no leſs than others, a mind free and open to all the common innocent gratifications of it, ſuch as they are. And if we go no further, does there appear any abſurdity in this? Will any one take upon him to ſay, that a man cannot find his account in this general courſe of life, as much as in the moſt unbounded ambition, and the exceſſes of pleaſure? Or that ſuch a perſon has not conſulted ſo well for himſelf, for the ſatisfaction and peace of his own mind, as the ambitious or diſſolute man? and though the conſideration, that God himſelf will in the end juſtify their taſte, and ſupport their cauſe, is not formally to be inſiſted upon here; yet thus much comes in, that all enjoyments whatever

are much more clear and unmixt from the aſſurance that they will end well. Is it certain then that there is nothing in theſe pretenſions to happineſs? eſpecially when there are not wanting perſons who have ſupported themſelves with ſatisfactions of this kind in ſickneſs, poverty, diſgrace, and in the very pangs of death; whereas it is manifeſt all other enjoyments fail in theſe circumſtances. This ſurely looks ſuſpicious of having ſomewhat in it. Self-love, methinks, ſhould be alarmed. May ſhe not poſſibly paſs over greater pleaſures, than thoſe ſhe is ſo wholly taken up with?

THE ſhort of the matter is no more than this. Happineſs conſiſts in the gratification of certain affections, appetites, paſſions, with objects which are by nature adapted to them. Self-love may indeed ſet us on work to gratify theſe: but happineſs or enjoyment has no immediate connection with ſelf-love, but ariſes from ſuch gratification alone. Love of our neighbour is one of thoſe affections. This, conſidered as a virtuous principle, is gratified by a conſciouſneſs of endeavouring to promote the good of others; but conſidered as a natu-

ral affection, its gratification conſiſts in the actual accompliſhment of this endeavour. Now indulgence or gratification of this affection, whether in that conſciouſneſs, or this accompliſhment, has the ſame reſpect to intereſt, as indulgence of any other affection; they equally proceed from or do not proceed from ſelf-love, they equally include or equally exclude this principle. Thus it appears, that benevolence and the purſuit of public good hath at leaſt as great reſpect to ſelf-love and the purſuit of private good, as any other particular paſſions, and their reſpective purſuits.

NEITHER is covetouſneſs, whether as a temper or purſuit, any exception to this. For if by covetouſneſs is meant the deſire and purſuit of riches for their own ſake, without any regard to, or conſideration of the uſes of them; this hath as little to do with ſelf-love, as benevolence hath. But by this word is uſually meant, not ſuch madneſs and total diſtraction of mind, but immoderate affection to and purſuit of riches as poſſeſſions in order to ſome further end: namely, ſatisfaction, intereſt, or good. This therefor is not a particular affec-

tion, or particular purſuit, but it is the general principle of ſelf-love, and the general purſuit of our own intereſt; for which reaſon the word, ſelfiſh, is by every one appropriated to this temper and purſuit. Now as it is ridiculous to aſſert, that ſelf-love and the love of our neighbour, are the ſame; ſo neither is it aſſerted, that following theſe different affections hath the ſame tendency and reſpect to our own intereſt. The compariſon is not between ſelf-love and the love of our neighbour; between purſuit of our own intereſt, and the intereſt of others: but between the ſeveral particular affections in human nature towards external objects, as one part of the compariſon; and the one particular affection to the good of our neighbour, as the other part of it: and it has been ſhewn, that all theſe have the ſame reſpect to ſelf-love and private intereſt.

THERE is, indeed, frequently an inconſiſtence or interfering between ſelf-love or private intereſt, and the ſeveral particular appetites, paſſions, affections, or the purſuits they lead to. But this competition or interfering is

merely accidental; and happens much oftener between pride, revenge, ſenſual gratifications, and private intereſt, than between private intereſt and benevolence. For nothing is more common, than to ſee men give themſelves up to a paſſion or an affection to their known prejudice and ruin, and in direct contradiction to manifeſt and real intereſt, and the loudeſt calls of ſelf-love: whereas the ſeeming competitions and interfering, between benevolence and private intereſt, relate much more to the materials or means of enjoyment, than to enjoyment itſelf. There is often an interfering in the former, when there is none in the latter. Thus as to riches: ſo much money as a man gives away, ſo much leſs will remain in his poſſeſſion. Here is a real interfering. But though a man cannot poſſibly give without leſſening his fortune, yet multitudes might give without leſſening their own enjoyment; becauſe they may have more than they can turn to any real uſe or advantage to themſelves. Thus the more thought and time any one employs about the intereſts and good of others, he muſt neceſſarily have leſs to attend

his own; but he may have ſo ready and large a ſupply of his own wants, that ſuch thought might be really uſeleſs to himſelf, though of great ſervice and aſſiſtance to others.

The general miſtake, that there is ſome greater inconſiſtence between endeavouring to promote the good of another and ſelf-intereſt, than between ſelf-intereſt and purſuing any thing elſe, ſeems, as hath already been hinted, to ariſe from our notions of property; and to be carried on by this property's being ſuppoſed to be itſelf our happineſs or good. People are ſo very much taken up with this one ſubject, that they ſeem from it to have formed a general way of thinking, which they apply to other things that they have nothing to do with. Hence, in a confuſed and ſlight way, it might well be taken for granted, that another's having no intereſt in an affection (that is, his good not being the object of it) renders, as one may ſpeak, the proprietor's intereſt in it greater; and that if another had an intereſt in it, this would render his leſs, or occaſion that ſuch affection could not be ſo friendly to ſelf-love, or conducive to private good, as an affection or

purſuit which has not a regard to the good of another. This, I ſay, might be taken for granted, whilſt it was not attended to, that the object of every particular affection is equally ſomewhat external to ourſelves; and whether it be the good of another perſon, or whether it be any other external thing, makes no alteration with regard to its being one's own affection, and the gratification of it one's own private enjoyment. And ſo far as it is taken for granted, that barely having the means and materials of enjoyment is what conſtitutes intereſt and happineſs; that our intereſt or good conſiſts in poſſeſſions themſelves, in having the property of riches, houſes, lands, gardens, not in the enjoyment of them; ſo far it will even more ſtrongly be taken for granted, in the way already explained, that an affection's conducing to the good of another, muſt even neceſſarily occaſion it to conduce leſs to private good, if not to be poſitively detrimental to it. For, if property and happineſs are one and the ſame thing, as by increaſing the property of another, you leſſen your own property, ſo by promoting the happineſs of another you muſt leſſen your own hap-

pineſs. But whatever occaſioned the miſtake, I hope it has been fully proved to be one; as it has been proved, that there is no peculiar rivalſhip or competition between ſelf-love and benevolence; that as there may be a competition between theſe two, ſo there may alſo between any particular affection whatever and ſelf-love; that every particular affection, benevolence among the reſt, is ſubſervient to ſelf-love by being the inſtrument of private enjoyment; and that in one reſpect benevolence contributes more to private intereſt, that is, enjoyment or ſatisfaction, than any other of the particular common affections, as it is in a degree its own gratification.

And to all theſe things may be added, that religion, from whence ariſes our ſtrongeſt obligation to benevolence, is ſo far from diſowning the principle of ſelf-love, that it often addreſſes itſelf to that very principle, and always to the mind in that ſtate when reaſon preſides; and there can no acceſs be had to the underſtanding, but by convincing men, that the courſe of life we would perſuade them to is not contrary to their intereſt. It may be to allowed,

without any prejudice to the cauſe of virtue and religion, that our ideas of happineſs and miſery are of all our ideas the neareſt and moſt important to us; that they will, nay, if you pleaſe, that they ought to prevail over thoſe of order, and beauty, and harmony, and proportion, if there ſhould ever be, as it is impoſſible there ever ſhould be, any inconſiſtence between them: though theſe laſt too, as expreſſing the fitneſs of actions, are real as truth itſelf. Let it be allowed, though virtue or moral rectitude does indeed conſiſt in affection to and purſuit of what is right and good, as ſuch; yet, that when we ſit down in a cool hour, we can neither juſtify to ourſelves this or any other purſuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happineſs, or at leaſt not contrary to it.

Common reaſon and humanity will have ſome influence upon mankind, whatever becomes of ſpeculations: but ſo far as the intereſts of virtue depend upon the theory of it being ſecured from open ſcorn, ſo far its very being in the world depends upon its appearing to have no contrariety to private intereſt and

ſelf-love. The foregoing obſervations therefor, it is hoped, may have gained a little ground in favour of the precept before us; the particular explanation of which ſhall be the ſubject of the next diſcourſe.

I WILL conclude at preſent, with obſerving the peculiar obligation which we are under to virtue and religion, as enforced in the verſes following the text, in the epiſtle for the day, from our Saviour's coming into the world. *The night is far ſpent, the day is at hand; let us therefor caſt off the works of darkneſs, and let us put on the armour of light*, etc. The meaning and force of which exhortation is, that chriſtianity lays us under new obligations to a good life, as by it the will of God is more clearly revealed, and as it affords additional motives to the practice of it, over and above thoſe which ariſe out of the nature of virtue and vice; I might add, as our Saviour has ſet us a perfect example of goodneſs in our own nature. Now love and charity is plainly the thing in which he hath placed his religion; in which therefor, as we have any pretence to the name of chriſtians, we muſt place ours.

He hath at once injoined it upon us by way of command with peculiar force; and by his example, as having undertaken the work of our ſalvation out of pure love and good-will to mankind. The endeavour to ſet home this example upon our minds is a very proper employment of this ſeaſon, which is bringing on the feſtival of his birth: which, as it may teach us many excellent leſſons of humility, reſignation, and obedience to the will of God; ſo there is none it recommends with greater authority, force and advantage, than this of love and charity: ſince it was for us men, and for our ſalvation, that he came down from heaven, and was incarnate, and was made man; that he might teach us our duty, and more eſpecially that he might enforce the practice of it, reform mankind, and finally bring us to that *eternal ſalvation*, of which *he is the author to all thoſe that obey him.*

SERMON XII.

Upon the Love of our Neighbour.

ROM. xiii. 9.

And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this ſaying, namely, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf.

HAVING already removed the prejudices againſt public ſpirit, or the love of our neighbour, on the ſide of private intereſt and ſelf-love; I proceed to the particular explanation of the precept before us, by ſhewing, *Who is our neighbour: in what ſenſe we are required to love him as ourſelves: the influence ſuch love would have upon our behaviour in life:* and laſtly, *how this commandment comprehends in it all others.*

I. THE objects and due extent of this affection will be underſtood by attending to the nature, and circumſtances of mankind in this world. The love of our neighbour is the ſame with charity, benevolence, or goodwill: it is an affection to the good and happineſs of our fellow-creatures. This implies in it a diſpoſition to produce happineſs: and this is the ſimple notion of goodneſs, which appears ſo amiable wherever we meet with it. From hence it is eaſy to ſee, that the perfection of goodneſs conſiſts in love to the whole univerſe. This is the perfection of Almighty God.

BUT as man is ſo much limited in his capacity, as ſo ſmall a part of the creation comes under his notice and influence, and as we are not uſed to conſider things in ſo general a way; it is not to be thought of, that the univerſe ſhould be the object of benevolence to ſuch creatures as we are. Thus in that precept of our Saviour, * *Be ye perfect even as your father which is in heaven is perfect*, the perfection of the divine goodneſs is propoſed to our imitation as it is promiſcuous, and extends to

* Matth. v. 48.

the evil as well as the good; not as it is abſolutely univerſal, imitation of it in this reſpect being plainly beyond us. The object is too vaſt. For this reaſon, moral writers alſo have ſubſtituted a leſs general object for our benevolence, mankind. But this likewiſe is an object too general, and very much out of our view. Therefor perſons more practical have, inſtead of mankind, put our country; and made the principle of virtue, of human virtue, to conſiſt in the intire uniform love of our country: and this is what we call a public ſpirit; which in men of public ſtations is the character of a patriot. But this is ſpeaking to the upper part of the world. Kingdoms and governments are large; and the ſphere of action of far the greateſt part of mankind is much narrower than the government they live under: or however, common men do not conſider their actions as affecting the whole community of which they are members. There plainly is wanting a leſs and nearer object of benevolence for the bulk of men, than that of their country. Therefor the ſcripture, not be-

ing a book of theory and ſpeculation, but a plain rule of life for mankind, has with the utmoſt poſſible propriety put the principle of virtue upon the love of our neighbour; which is that part of the univerſe, that part of mankind, that part of our country, which comes under our immediate notice, acquaintance and influence, and with which we have to do.

THIS is plainly the true account or reaſon, why our Saviour places the principle of virtue in the love of our neighbour; and the account itſelf ſhows who are comprehended under that relation.

II. LET us now conſider in what ſenſe we are commanded to love our neighbour *as ourſelves*.

THIS precept, in its firſt delivery by our Saviour, is thus introduced: *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength; and thy neighbour as thy ſelf.* Theſe very different manners of expreſſion do not lead our thoughts to the ſame meaſure or degree of love, common to both objects; but to one, peculiar to each. Supoſing then, which is to be ſuppoſed, a di-

ſtinct meaning and propriety in the words, *as thy ſelf*; the precept we are conſidering will admit of any of theſe ſenſes: that we bear the ſame kind of affection to our neighbour, as we do to ourſelves: or, that the love we bear to our neighbour ſhould have ſome certain proportion or other to ſelf-love: or, laſtly, that it ſhould bear the particular proportion of equality, that it be in the ſame degree.

Firſt, The precept may be underſtood as requiring only, that we have the ſame kind of affection to our fellow-creatures, as to ourſelves: that, as every man has the principle of ſelf-love, which diſpoſes him to avoid miſery, and conſult his own happineſs; ſo we ſhould cultivate the affection of good-will to our neighbour, and that it ſhould influence us to have the ſame kind of regard to him. This at leaſt muſt be commanded: and this will not only prevent our being injurious to him, but will alſo put us upon promoting his good. There are bleſſings in life, which we ſhare in common with others; peace, plenty, freedom, healthful ſeaſons. But real benevolence to our fellow-creatures would give us the notion of a

common intereſt in a ſtricter ſenſe: for in the degree we love one another, his intereſt, his joys and ſorrows, are our own. It is from ſelf-love that we form the notion of private good, and conſider it as our own: love of our neighbour would teach us thus to appropriate to ourſelves his good and well-fare; to conſider ourſelves as having a real ſhare in his happineſs. Thus the principle of benevolence would be an advocate within our own breaſts, to take care of the intereſts of our fellow-creatures in all the interfering and competitions which cannot but be, from the imperfection of our nature, and the ſtate we are in. It would likewiſe, in ſome meaſure, leſſen that interfering; and hinder men from forming ſo ſtrong a notion of private good, excluſive of the good of others, as we commonly do. Thus, as the private affection makes us in a peculiar manner ſenſible of humanity, juſtice, or injuſtice, when exerciſed towards ourſelves; love of our neighbour would give us the ſame kind of ſenſibility in his behalf. This would be the greateſt ſecurity of our uniform obedience to that moſt equitable rule; *Whatſoever*

ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo unto them.

All this is indeed no more than that we ſhould have a real love to our neighbour; but then, which is to be obſerved, the words, *as thy ſelf*, expreſs this in the moſt diſtinct manner, and determine the precept to relate to the affection itſelf. The advantage, which this principle of benevolence has over other remote conſiderations, is that it is itſelf the temper of virtue; and likewiſe, that it is the chief nay, the only effectual ſecurity of our performing the ſeveral offices of kindneſs we owe to our fellow-creatures. When, from diſtant conſiderations men reſolve upon any thing to which they have no liking, or perhaps an averſeneſs, they are perpetually finding out evaſions and excuſes; which need never be wanting, if people look for them; and they equivocate with themſelves in the plaineſt caſes in the world. This may be in reſpect to ſingle determinate acts of virtue: but it comes in much more, where the obligation is to a general courſe of behaviour; and moſt of all, if it be ſuch as cannot be reduced to fixed determinate rules.

This obſervation may account for the diverſity of the expreſſion, in that known paſſage of the prophet Micah: *To do juſtly, and to love mercy.* A man's heart muſt be formed to humanity and benevolence, he muſt *love mercy*, otherwiſe he will not act mercifully in any ſettled courſe of behaviour. As conſideration of the future ſanctions of religion is our only ſecurity of perſevering in our duty, in caſes of great temptations: ſo to get our heart and temper formed to a love and liking of what is good, is abſolutely neceſſary in order to our behaving rightly in the familiar and daily intercourſes amongſt mankind.

Secondly, THE precept before us may be underſtood to require, that we love our neighbour in ſome certain proportion or other, according as we love ourſelves. And indeed a man's character cannot be determined by the love he bears to his neighbour, conſidered abſolutely: but the proportion which this bears to ſelf-love, whether it be attended to or not, is the chief thing which forms the character, and influences the actions. For, as the form of the body is a compoſition of various parts;

ſo likewiſe our inward ſtructure is not ſimple or uniform, but a compoſition of various paſſions, appetites, affections, together with rationality; including in this laſt, both the diſcernment of what is right, and a diſpoſition to regulate ourſelves by it. There is greater variety of parts in what we call a character, than there are features in a face: and the morality of that is no more determined by one part, than the beauty or deformity of this is by one ſingle feature: each is to be judged of by all the parts or features, not taken ſingly but together. In the inward frame the various paſſions, appetites, affections, ſtand in different reſpects to each other. The principles in our mind may be contradictory, or checks and allays only, or incentives and aſſiſtants to each other. And principles, which in their nature have no kind of contrariety or affinity, may yet accidentally be each other's allays or incentives.

From hence it comes to paſs, that though we were able to look into the inward contexture of the heart, and ſee with the greateſt ex-

actneſs in what degree any one principle is in a particular man; we could not from thence determine, how far that principle would go towards forming the character, or what influence it would have upon the actions, unleſs we could likewiſe diſcern what other principles prevailed in him, and ſee the proportion which that one bears to the others. Thus, though two men ſhould have the affection of compaſſion in the ſame degree exactly; yet one may have the principle of reſentment, or of ambition ſo ſtrong in him, as to prevail over that of compaſſion, and prevent its having any influence upon his actions; ſo that he may deſerve the character of a hard and cruel man: whereas the other, having compaſſion in juſt the ſame degree only, yet having reſentment or ambition in a lower degree, his compaſſion may prevail over them, ſo as to influence his actions, and to denominate his temper compaſſionate. So that, how ſtrange ſoever it may appear to people who do not attend to the thing, yet it is quite manifeſt, that, when we ſay, one man is more reſenting or compaſſionate than another, this does not neceſſarily imply

that one has the principle of reſentment or of compaſſion ſtronger than the other. For if the proportion which reſentment or compaſſion bears to other inward principles, is greater in one than in the other; this is itſelf ſufficient to denominate one more reſenting or compaſſionate than the other.

FURTHER, the whole ſyſtem, as I may ſpeak, of affections, (including rationality) which conſtitute the heart, as this word is uſed in ſcripture and on moral ſubjects, are each and all of them ſtronger in ſome than in others. Now the proportion which the two general affections, benevolence and ſelf-love, bear to each other, according to this interpretation of the text, denominates men's character as to virtue. Suppoſe then one man to have the principle of benevolence in an higher degree than another: it will not follow from hence, that his general temper, or character, or actions, will be mere benevolent than the other's. For he may have ſelf-love in ſuch a degree as quite to prevail over benevolence; ſo that it may have no influence at all upon his actions: whereas benevolence in the other perſon, tho'

in a lower degree, may yet be the ſtrongeſt principle in his heart; and ſtrong enough to be the guide of his actions, ſo as to denominate him a good and virtuous man. The caſe is here as in ſcales: it is not one weight, conſidered in itſelf, which determines whether the ſcale ſhall aſcend or deſcend; but this depends upon the proportion, which that one weight hath to the other,

It being thus manifeſt that the influence which benevolence hath upon our actions, and how far it goes towards forming our character, is not determined by the degree itſelf of this principle in our mind; but the proportion it has to ſelf-love and other principles: a compariſon alſo being made in the text between ſelf-love and the love of our neighbour; theſe joint conſiderations afforded ſufficient occaſion for treating here of that proportion: it plainly is implied in the precept, though it ſhould be queſtioned whether it be the exact meaning of the words, *as thy ſelf*.

Love of our neighbour then muſt bear ſome proportion to ſelf-love, and virtue to be ſure conſiſts in the due proportion. What this due

proportion is, whether as a principle in the mind, or as exerted in actions, can be judged of only from our nature and condition in this world. Of the degree in which affections and the principles of action, conſidered in themſelves, prevail, we have no meaſure: let us then proceed to the courſe of behaviour, the actions they produce.

Both our nature and condition require, that each particular man ſhould make particular proviſion for himſelf: and the inquiry, what proportion benevolence ſhould have to ſelf-love, when brought down to practice, will be, what is a competent care and proviſion for ourſelves. And how certain ſoever it be, that each man muſt determine this for himſelf; and how ridiculous ſoever it would be, for any to attempt to determine it for another: yet it is to be obſerved, that the proportion is real; and that a competent proviſion has a bound; and that it cannot be all which we can poſſibly get and keep within our graſp, without legal injuſtice. Mankind almoſt univerſally bring in, vanity, ſupplies for what is called a life of pleaſure, covetouſneſs, or imaginary no-

tions of ſuperiority over others, to determine this queſtion: but every one, who deſires to act a proper part in ſociety, would do well to conſider, how far any of them come in to determine it, in the way of moral conſideration. All that can be ſaid is, ſuppoſing, what, as the world goes, is ſo much to be ſuppoſed that it is ſcarce to be mentioned, that perſons do not neglect what they really owe to themſelves; the more of their care and thought, and of their fortune they employ in doing good to their fellow-creatures, the nearer they come up to the law of perfection, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf.*

Thirdly, If the words, *as thy ſelf*, were to be underſtood of an equality of affection; it would not be attended with thoſe conſequences, which perhaps may be thought to follow from it. Suppoſe a perſon to have the ſame ſettled regard to others, as to himſelf; that in every deliberate ſcheme or purſuit, he took their intereſt into the account in the ſame degree as his own, ſo far as an equality of affection would produce this: yet he would in fact, and ought to be, much more taken up and

employed about himſelf, and his own concerns, than about others, and their intereſts. For, beſides the one common affection toward himſelf and his neighbour, he would have ſeveral other particular affections, paſſions, appetites, which he could not poſſibly feel in common both for himſelf and others: now theſe ſenſations themſelves very much employ us; and have perhaps as great influence, as ſelf-love. So far indeed as ſelf-love, and cool reflection upon what is for our intereſt, would ſet us on work to gain a ſupply of our own ſeveral wants; ſo far the love of our neighbour would make us do the ſame for him: but the degree in which we are put upon ſeeking and making uſe of the means of gratification, by the feeling of thoſe affections, appetites and paſſions, muſt neceſſarily be peculiar to ourſelves.

THAT there are particular paſſions, (ſuppoſe ſhame, reſentment) which men ſeem to have, and feel in common both for themſelves and others, makes no alteration in reſpect to thoſe paſſions and appetites which cannot poſſibly be thus felt in common. From hence, (and perhaps more things of the like kind might

be mentioned,) it follows, that though there were an equality of affection to both, yet regards to ourſelves would be more prevalent than attention to the concerns of others.

And from moral conſiderations it ought to be ſo, ſuppoſing ſtill the equality of affection commanded: becauſe we are in a peculiar manner, as I may ſpeak, entruſted with ourſelves; and therefor care of our own intereſts, as well as of our conduct, particularly belongs to us.

To theſe things muſt be added, that moral obligations can extend no further than to natural poſſibilities. Now we have a perception of our own intereſts, like conſciouſneſs of our own exiſtence, which we always carry about with us; and which, in its continuation, kind and degree, ſeems impoſſible to be felt in reſpect to the intereſts of others.

From all theſe things, it fully appears, that though we were to love our neighbour in the ſame degree as we love ourſelves, ſo far as this is poſſible; yet the care of ourſelves, of the individual, would not be neglected; the apprehended danger of which ſeems to be the

only objection againſt underſtanding the precept in this ſtrict ſenſe.

III. The general temper of mind which the due love of our neighbour would form us to, and the influence it would have upon our behaviour in life, is now to be conſidered.

The temper and behaviour of charity is explained at large, in that known paſſage of St. Paul*: *Charity ſuffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not, doth not behave itſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things.* As to the meaning of the expreſſions, *ſeeketh not her own, thinketh no evil, believeth all things;* however thoſe expreſſions may be explained away, this meekneſs, and, in ſome degree, eaſineſs of temper, readineſs to forego our right for the ſake of peace as well as in the way of compaſſion, freedom from miſtruſt, and diſpoſition to believe well of our neighbour, this general temper, I ſay, accompanies and is plainly the effect of love and good-will. And, though ſuch is the world in which we live, that experience and knowlege of it not only

* 1 Cor. xiii.

may, but muſt beget in us greater regard to ourſelves, and doubtfulneſs of the characters of others, than is natural to mankind; yet theſe ought not to be carried further than the nature and courſe of things make neceſſary. It is ſtill true, even in the preſent ſtate of things, bad as it is, that a real good man had rather be deceived, than be ſuſpicious; had rather forego his known right, than run the venture of doing even a hard thing. This is the general temper of that charity, of which the apoſtle aſſerts, that if he had it not, giving his *body to be burned would avail him nothing;* and which, he ſays, *ſhall never fail.*

THE happy influence of this temper extends to every different relation and circumſtance in human life. It plainly renders a man better, more to be deſired, as to all the reſpects and relations we can ſtand in to each other. The benevolent man is diſpoſed to make uſe of all external advantages in ſuch a manner, as ſhall contribute to the good of others, as well as to his own ſatisfaction. His own ſatisfaction conſiſts in this. He will be eaſy and kind to his dependants, compaſſionate to the poor and

diſtreſſed, friendly to all with whom he has to do. This includes the good neighbour, parent, maſter, magiſtrate: and ſuch a behaviour would plainly make dependance, inferiority, and even ſervitude, eaſy. So that a good or charitable man of ſuperior rank in wiſdom, fortune, authority, is a common bleſſing to the place he lives in; happineſs grows under his influence. This good principle in inferiours would diſcover itſelf in paying reſpect, gratitude, obedience, as due. It were therefor, methinks, one juſt way of trying one's own character, to aſk ourſelves, Am I, in reality, a better maſter or ſervant, a better friend, a better neighbour, than ſuch and ſuch perſons; whom, perhaps, I may think not to deſerve the character of virtue and religion ſo much as myſelf?

And as to the ſpirit of party, which unhappily prevails amongſt mankind, whatever are the diſtinctions which ſerve for a ſupply to it, ſome or other of which have obtained in all ages and countries: one, who is thus friendly to his kind, will immediately make due allowances for it, as what cannot but be amongſt ſuch creatures as men, in ſuch a world as this.

And as wrath and fury and overbearing upon theſe occaſions proceed, as I may ſpeak, from men's feeling only on their own ſide: ſo a common feeling, for others as well as for ourſelves, would render us ſenſible to this truth, which, it is ſtrange, can have ſo little influence; that we ourſelves differ from others, juſt as much as they do from us. I put the matter in this way, becauſe it can ſcarce be expected that the generality of men ſhould ſee, that thoſe things, which are made the occaſions of diſſenſion and fomenting the party-ſpirit, are really nothing at all: but it may be expected from all people, how much ſoever they are in earneſt about their reſpective peculiarities, that humanity and common good-will to theſe fellow-creatures, ſhould moderate and reſtrain that wretched ſpirit.

THIS good temper of charity likewiſe would prevent ſtrife and enmity ariſing from other occaſions: it would prevent our giving juſt cauſe of offence, and our taking it without cauſe. And in caſes of real injury, a good man will make all allowances which are to be made; and, without any attempts of retalia-

tion, he will only conſult his own and other men's ſecurity for the future, againſt injuſtice and wrong.

IV. I PROCEED to conſider, laſtly, what is affirmed of the precept now explained, that it comprehends in it all others; *i. e.* that to love our neighbour as ourſelves includes in it all virtues.

Now the way in which every maxim of conduct, or general ſpeculative aſſertion, when it is to be explained at large, ſhould be treated, is to ſhow what are the particular truths which were deſigned to be comprehended under ſuch a general obſervation, how far it is ſtrictly true; and then the limitations, reſtrictions, and exceptions, if there be exceptions, with which it is to be underſtood. But it is only the former of theſe, namely, how far the aſſertion in the text holds, and the ground of the pre-eminence aſſigned to the precept of it, which in ſtrictneſs comes into our preſent conſideration.

HOWEVER, in almoſt every thing that is ſaid, there is ſomewhat to be underſtood beyond what is expliicitely laid down, and which we of courſe ſupply; ſomewhat, I mean,

which would not be commonly called a reſtriction or limitation. Thus, when benevolence is ſaid to be the ſum of virtue, it is not ſpoken of as a blind propenſion, but as a principle in reaſonable creatures, and ſo to be directed by their reaſon: for reaſon and reflection comes into our notion of a moral agent. And that will lead us to conſider diſtant conſequences, as well as the immediate tendency of an action: it will teach us, that the care of ſome perſons, ſuppoſe children and families, is particularly committed to our charge by nature and providence; as alſo that there are other circumſtances, ſuppoſe friendſhip or former obligations. which require that we do good to ſome, preferably to others. Reaſon conſidered merely as ſubſervient to benevolence, as aſſiſting to produce the greateſt good, will teach us to have particular regard to theſe relations and circumſtanees; becauſe it is plainly for the good of the world that they ſhould be regarded. And as there are numberleſs caſes, in which, notwithſtanding appearances, we are not competent judges, whether a particular action will upon the whole do good or harm;

reaſon in the ſame way will teach us to be cautious how we act in theſe caſes of uncertainty. It will ſuggeſt to our conſideration, which is the ſafer ſide; how liable we are to be led wrong by paſſion and private intereſt; and what regard is due to laws and the judgment of mankind. All theſe things muſt come into conſideration, were it only in order to determine which way of acting is likely to produce the greateſt good. Thus, upon ſuppoſition that it were in the ſtricteſt ſenſe true, without limitation, that benevolence includes in it all virtues; yet reaſon muſt come in as its guide and director, in order to attain its own end, the end of benevolence, the greateſt public good. Reaſon then being thus included, let us now conſider the truth of the aſſertion itſelf.

Firſt, It is manifeſt, that nothing can be of conſequence to mankind or any creature, but happineſs. This then is all which any perſon can, in ſtrictneſs of ſpeaking, be ſaid to have a right to. We can therefor *owe no man any thing*, but only to further and promote his happineſs, according to our abilities. And therefor a diſpoſition and endeavour to do good

to all with whom we have to do, in the degree and manner which the different relations we ſtand in to them require, is a diſcharge of all the obligations we are under to them.

As human nature is not one ſimple uniform thing, but a compoſition of various parts; body, ſpirit, appetites, particular paſſions and affections; for each of which reaſonable ſelf-love would lead men to have due regard, and make ſuitable proviſion: ſo ſociety conſiſts of various parts, to which we ſtand in different reſpects and relations; and juſt benevolence would as ſurely lead us to have due regard to each of theſe, and behave as the reſpective relations require. Reaſonable good-will, and right behaviour towards our fellow-creatures, are in a manner the ſame: only that the former expreſſeth the principle as it is in the mind; the latter, the principle as it were become external, that is, exerted in actions.

And ſo far as temperance, ſobriety, and moderation in ſenſual pleaſures, and the contrary vices, have any reſpect to our fellow-creatures, any influence upon their quiet, wel-

fare, and happineſs; as they always have a real, and often a near influence upon it; ſo far it is manifeſt, thoſe virtues may be produced by the love of our neighbour, and that the contrary vices would be prevented by it. Indeed, if men's regard to themſelves will not reſtrain them from exceſs; it may be thought little probable, that their love to others will be ſufficient: but the reaſon is, that their love to others is not, any more than their regard to themſelves, juſt, and in its due degree. There are however manifeſt inſtances of perſons kept ſober and temperate from regard to their affairs, and the welfare of thoſe who depend upon them. And it is obvious to every one, that habitual exceſs, a diſſolute courſe of life, implies a general neglect of the duties we owe towards our friends, our families and our country.

From hence it is manifeſt that the common virtues, and the common vices of mankind, may be traced up to benevolence, or the want of it. And this intitles the precept, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf*, to the pre-eminence

given to it; and is a juſtification of the apoſtle's aſſertion, that all other commandments are comprehended in it; whatever cautions and reflections * there are, which might require

* For inſtance: as we are not competent judges, what is upon the whole for the good of the world; there may be other immediate ends appointed us to purſue, beſides that one of doing good, or producing happineſs. Though the good of the creation be the only end of the author of it, yet he may have laid us under particular obligations, which we may diſcern and feel ourſelves under, quite diſtinct from a perception, that the obſervance or violation of them is for the happineſs or miſery of our fellow-creatures. And this is in fact the caſe. For there are certain diſpoſitions of mind, and certain actions, which are in themſelves approved or diſapproved by mankind, abſtracted from the conſideration of their tendency to the happineſs or miſery of the world; approved or diſapproved by reflection, by that principle which is the guide of life, the judge of right and wrong. Numberleſs inſtances of this kind might be mentioned. There are pieces of treachery, which in themſelves appear baſe and deteſtable to every one. There are actions, which perhaps can ſcarce have any other general name given them than indecencies, which yet are odious and ſhocking to human nature. There is ſuch a thing as meanneſs, a little mind; which, as it is quite diſtinct from incapacity, ſo it raiſes a diſlike

to be conſidered, if we were to ſtate particularly and at length, what is virtue and right behaviour in mankind. But,

Secondly, It might be added, that in a higher and more general way of conſideration, leaving out the particular nature of creatures, and the particular circumſtances in which they are placed, benevolence ſeems in the ſtricteſt ſenſe to include in it all that is good and worthy;

and diſapprobation quite different from that contempt, which men are too apt to have of mere folly. On the other hand; what we call greatneſs of mind, is the object of another ſort of approbation, than ſuperiour underſtanding. Fidelity, honour, ſtrict juſtice, are themſelves approved in the higheſt degree, abſtracted from the conſideration of their tendency. Now, whether it be thought that each of theſe are connected with benevolence in our nature, and ſo may be conſidered as the ſame thing with it; or whether ſome of them be thought an inferiour kind of virtues and vices, ſomewhat like natural beauties and deformities; or laſtly, plain exceptions to the general rule; thus much however is certain, that the things now inſtanced in, and numberleſs others, are approved or diſapproved by mankind in general, in quite another view than as conducive to the happineſs or miſery of the world.

all that is good, which we have any diſtinct particular notion of. We have no clear conception of any poſitive moral attribute in the ſupreme Being, but what may be reſolved up into goodneſs. And, if we conſider a reaſonable creature or moral agent, without regard to the particular relations and circumſtances in which he is placed; we cannot conceive any thing elſe to come in towards determining whether he is to be ranked in an higher or lower claſs of virtuous beings, but the higher or lower degree in which that principle, and what is manifeſtly connected with it, prevail in him.

THAT which we more ſtrictly call piety, or the love of God, and which is an eſſential part of a right temper, ſome may perhaps imagine no way connected with benevolence: yet ſurely they muſt be connected, if there be indeed in being an object infinitely good. Human nature is ſo conſtituted, that every good affection implies the love of itſelf; that is, becomes the object of a new affection in the ſame perſon. Thus, to be righteous implies in it the love of righteouſneſs; to be benevolent, the love of benevolence; to be good, the love of good-

neſs; whether this righteouſneſs, benevolence, or goodneſs, be viewed as in our own mind, or in another's: and the love of God, as a Being perfectly good, is the love of perfect goodneſs contemplated in a being or perſon. Thus morality and religion, virtue and piety, will at laſt neceſſarily coincide, run up into one and the ſame point, and *love* will be in all ſenſes *the end of the commandment.*

O Almighty God! inſpire us with this divine principle; kill in us all the ſeeds of envy and ill-will; and help us by cultivating within ourſelves the love of our neighbour, to improve in the love of Thee. Thou haſt placed us in various kindreds, friendſhips, and relations, as the ſchool of diſcipline for our affections: help us by the due exerciſe of them, to improve to perfection; till all partial affection be loſt in that intire univerſal one, and Thou, O God, ſhalt be all in all.

SERMON XIII, XIV.

Upon the Love of God.

MATTH. xxii. 37.

Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind.

EVERY body knows, you therefore need only juſt be put in mind, that there is ſuch a thing, as having ſo great horror of one extreme, as to run inſenſibly and of courſe into the contrary; and that a doctrine's having been a ſhelter for enthuſiaſm, or made to ſerve the purpoſes of ſuperſtition, is no proof of the falſity of it: truth or right being ſomewhat real in itſelf, and ſo not to be judged of by its liableneſs to abuſe, or by its ſuppoſed diſtance from or nearneſs to error. It may be ſuffi-

cient to have mentioned this in general, without taking notice of the particular extravagancies, which have been vented under the pretence or endeavour of explaining the love of God; or how manifeſtly we are got into the contrary extreme, under the notion of a reaſonable religion; ſo very reaſonable as to have nothing to do with the heart and affections, if theſe words ſignify any thing but the faculty by which we diſcern ſpeculative truth.

By the love of God, I would underſtand all thoſe regards, all thoſe affections of mind which are due immediately to him from ſuch a creature as man, and which reſt in him as their end. As this does not include ſervile fear; ſo neither will any other regards, how reaſonable ſoever, which reſpect any thing out of or beſides the perfection of the divine nature, come into conſideration here. But all fear is not excluded, becauſe his diſpleaſure is itſelf the natural proper object of fear. Reverence, ambition of his love and approbation, delight in the hope or conſciouſneſs of it, come likewiſe into this definition of the love of God; becauſe he is the natural object of all thoſe affections

or movements of mind, as really as he is the object of the affection, which is in the ſtricteſt ſenſe called love; and all of them equally reſt in him, as their end. And they may all be underſtood to be implied in theſe words of our Saviour, without putting any force upon them: for he is ſpeaking of the love of God and our neighbour, as containing the whole of piety and virtue.

It is plain that the nature of man is ſo conſtituted, as to feel certain affections upon the ſight or contemplation of certain objects. Now the very notion of affection implies reſting in its object as an end. And the particular affection to good characters, reverence and moral love of them, is natural to all thoſe who have any degree of real goodneſs in themſelves. This will be illuſtrated by the deſcription of a perfect character in a creature; and by conſidering the manner in which a good man in his preſence would be affected towards ſuch a character. He would of courſe feel the affections of love, reverence, deſire of his approbation, delight in the hope or conſciouſneſs of it. And

ſurely all this is applicable, and may be brought up to that being, who is infinitely more than an adequate object of all thoſe affections; whom we are commanded to *love with all our heart, with all our ſoul, and with all our mind.* And of theſe regards towards Almighty God, ſome are more particularly ſuitable to and becoming ſo imperfect a creature as man, in this mortal ſtate, we are paſſing through; and ſome of them, and perhaps other exerciſes of the mind, will be the employment and happineſs of good men in a ſtate of perfection.

THIS is a general view of what the following diſcourſe will contain. And it is manifeſt, the ſubject is a real one: there is nothing in it enthuſiaſtical or unreaſonable. And if it be indeed at all a ſubject, it is one of the utmoſt importance.

As mankind have a faculty by which they diſcern ſpeculative truth; ſo we have various affections towards external objects. Underſtanding and temper, reaſon and affection, are as diſtinct ideas, as reaſon and hunger; and one would think could no more be confounded. It is by reaſon that we get the ideas

of ſeveral objects of our affections: but in theſe caſes, reaſon and affection are no more the ſame, than ſight of a particular object, and the pleaſure and uneaſineſs conſequent thereupon, are the ſame. Now, as reaſon tends to and reſts in the diſcernment of truth, the object of it; ſo the very nature of affection conſiſts in tending towards and reſting in its object as an end. We do indeed often in common language ſay, that things are loved, deſired, eſteemed, not for themſelves, but for ſomewhat further, ſomewhat out of and beyond them: yet, in theſe caſes, whoever will attend, will ſee, that theſe are not in reality the objects of the affections, that is, are not loved, deſired, eſteemed, but the ſomewhat further and beyond them. If we have no affections which reſt in what are called their objects, then what is called affection, love, deſire, hope, in human nature, is only an uneaſineſs in being at reſt; an unquiet diſpoſition to action, progreſs, purſuit, without end or meaning. But if there be any ſuch thing as delight in the company of one perſon, rather than of another; whether in the way of friendſhip, or mirth and entertainment, it

is all one, if it be without reſpect to fortune, honour, or encreaſing our ſtores of knowlege, or any thing beyond the preſent time; here is an inſtance of an affection abſolutely reſting in its object as its end, and being gratified, in the ſame way as the appetite of hunger is ſatisfied with food. Yet nothing is more common than to hear it aſked, What advantage a man hath in ſuch a courſe, ſuppoſe of ſtudy, particular friendſhips, or in any other; nothing, I ſay, is more common than to hear ſuch a queſtion put in a way which ſuppoſes no gain, advantage or intereſt, but as a means to ſomewhat further: and if ſo, then there is no ſuch thing at all as real intereſt, gain or advantage. This is the ſame abſurdity with reſpect to life, as an infinite ſeries of effects without a cauſe is in ſpeculation. The gain, advantage or intereſt conſiſts in the delight itſelf, ariſing from ſuch a faculty's having its object: neither is there any ſuch thing as happineſs or enjoyment, but what ariſes from hence. The pleaſures of hope and of reflection are not exceptions: the former being only this happineſs anticipated; the latter, the ſame happineſs enjoyed

over again after its time. And even the general expectation of future happineſs can afford ſatisfaction, only as it is a preſent object to the principle of ſelf-love.

It was doubtleſs intended, that life ſhould be very much a purſuit to the groſs of mankind. But this is carried ſo much further than is reaſonable, that what gives immediate ſatisfaction, that is, our preſent intereſt, is ſcarce conſidered as our intereſt at all. It is inventions which have only a remote tendency towards enjoyment, perhaps but a remote tendency towards gaining the means only of enjoyment, which are chiefly ſpoken of as uſeful to the world. And though this way of thinking were juſt with reſpect to the imperfect ſtate we are now in, where we know ſo little of ſatisfaction without ſatiety; yet it muſt be guarded againſt, when we are conſidering the happineſs of a ſtate of perfection; which happineſs being enjoyment and not hope, muſt neceſſarily conſiſt in this, that our affections have their objects as an end, that is, be ſatisfied with them. This will further appear in the ſequel of this diſcourſe.

Of the ſeveral affections, or inward ſenſations, which particular objects excite in man, there are ſome, the having of which implies the love of them, when they are reflected upon *. This cannot be ſaid of all our affections, principles, and motives of action. It were ridiculous to aſſert, that a man upon reflection hath the ſame kind of approbation of the appetite of hunger, or the paſſion of fear, as he hath of good-will to his fellow-creatures. To be a juſt, a good, a righteous man, plainly carries with it a peculiar affection to, or love of juſtice, goodneſs, righteouſneſs, when theſe principles are the objects of contemplation. Now if a man approves of, or hath an affection to, any principle in and for itſelf; incidental things allowed for, it will be the ſame whe-

* St. Auſtin obſerves, Amor ipſe ordinate amandus eſt, quo bene amatur quod amandum eſt, ut ſit in nobis virtus, quâ vivitur bene. That is, The affection which we rightly have for what is lovely, muſt *ordinate* juſtly, in due manner, and proportion, become the object of a new affection, or be itſelf beloved, in order to our being endued with that virtue which is the principle of a good life. Civ. Dei. L. 15. c. 22.

ther he views it in his own mind or in another; in himſelf, or in his neighbour. This is the account of our approbation of, our moral love and affection to good characters; which cannot but be in thoſe who have any degrees of real goodneſs in themſelves, and who diſcern and take notice of the ſame principle in others.

From obſervation of what paſſes within ourſelves, our own actions and the behaviour of others, the mind may carry on its reflections as far as it pleaſes; much beyond what we experience in ourſelves, or diſcern in our fellow-creatures. It may go on, and conſider goodneſs as become an uniform continued principle of action, as conducted by reaſon, and forming a temper and character abſolutely good and perfect, which is in a higher ſenſe excellent, and proportionably the object of love and approbation.

Let us then ſuppoſe a creature perfect according to his created nature: let his form be human, and his capacities no more than equal to thoſe of the chief of men: goodneſs ſhall be his proper character; with wiſdom to direct it, and power within ſome certain determined

ſphere of action to exert it: but goodneſs muſt be the ſimple actuating principle within him; this being the moral quality which is amiable, or the immediate object of love as diſtinct from other affections of approbation. Here then is a finite object for our minds to tend towards, to exerciſe itſelf upon: a creature, perfect according to his capacity, fixt, ſteady, equally unmoved by weak pity, or more weak fury and reſentment; forming the juſteſt ſcheme of conduct; going on undiſturbed in the execution of it, through the ſeveral methods of ſeverity and reward, toward his end, namely, the general happineſs of all with whom he hath to do, as in itſelf right and valuable. This character, though uniform in itſelf, in its principle, yet exerting itſelf in different ways, or conſidered in different views, may by its appearing variety move different affections, Thus, the ſeverity of juſtice would not affect us in the ſame way, as an act of mercy: the adventitious qualities of wiſdom and power may be conſidered in themſelves: and even the ſtrength of mind, which this immoveable goodneſs ſuppoſes, may likewiſe be viewed as an object of

contemplation, diſtinct from the goodneſs itſelf. Superiour excellence of any kind, as well as ſuperiour wiſdom and power, is the object of awe and reverence to all creatures, whatever their moral character be: but ſo far as creatures of the loweſt rank were good, ſo far the view of this character, as ſimply good, muſt appear amiable to them, be the object of, or beget love. Further, ſuppoſe we were conſcious, that this ſuperiour perſon ſo far approved of us, that we had nothing ſervilely to fear from him; that he was really our friend, and kind and good to us in particular, as he had occaſionally intercourſe with us: we muſt be other creatures than we are, or we could not but feel the ſame kind of ſatisfaction and enjoyment (whatever would be the degree of it) from this higher acquaintance and friendſhip, as we feel from common ones; the intercourſe being real, and the perſons equally preſent, in both caſes. We ſhould have a more ardent deſire to be approved by his better judgment, and a ſatisfaction in that approbation of the ſame ſort with what would be felt in reſpect

to common perſons, or be wrought in us by their preſence.

LET us now raiſe the character, and ſuppoſe this creature, for we are ſtill going on with the ſuppoſition of a creature, our proper guardian and governour; that we were in a progreſs of being towards ſomewhat further; and that his ſcheme of government was too vaſt for our capacities to comprehend; remembering ſtill that he is perfectly good, and our friend as well as our governour. Wiſdom, power, goodneſs, acidentally viewed any where, would inſpire reverence, awe, love: and as theſe affections would be raiſed in higher and lower degrees, in proportion as we had occaſionally more or leſs intercourſe with the creature endued with thoſe qualities; ſo this further conſideration and knowlege, that he was our proper guardian and governour, would much more bring theſe objects and qualities home to ourſelves; teach us they had a greater reſpect to us in particular, that we had an higher intereſt in that wiſdom and power and goodneſs. We ſhould, with joy, gratitude, reverence, love, truſt, and dependance, ap-

propriate the character, as what we had a right in; and make our boaſt in ſuch our relation to it. And the concluſion of the whole would be, that we ſhould refer ourſelves implicitely to him, and caſt ourſelves entirely upon him. As the whole attention of life ſhould be to obey his commands; ſo the higheſt enjoyment of it muſt ariſe from the contemplation of this character, and our relation to it, from a conſciouſneſs of his favour and approbation, and from the exerciſe of thoſe affections towards him, which could not but be raiſed from his preſence. A being who hath theſe attributes, who ſtands in this relation, and is thus ſenſibly preſent to the mind, muſt neceſſarily be the object of theſe affections: there is as real a correſpondence between them, as between the loweſt appetite of ſenſe and its object.

That this Being is not a creature, but the Almighty God; that he is of infinite power and wiſdom and goodneſs, does not render him leſs the object of reverence and love, than he would be if he had thoſe attributes only in a limited degree. The being who made us,

and upon whom we entirely depend, is the object of ſome regards. He hath given us certain affections of mind, which correſpond to wiſdom, power, goodneſs; that is, which are raiſed upon view of thoſe qualities. If then he be really wiſe, powerful, good; he is the natural object of thoſe affections, which he hath endued us with, and which correſpond to thoſe attributes. That he is infinite in power, perfect in wiſdom and goodneſs, makes no alteration, but only that he is the object of thoſe affections raiſed to the higheſt pitch. He is not indeed to be diſcerned by any of our ſenſes. *I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himſelf on the right hand, that I cannot ſee him. O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his ſeat!* * But is he then afar off: does he not fill heaven and earth with his preſence? The preſence of our fellow-creatures affects our ſenſes, and our ſenſes give us the knowlege of their preſence; which hath different kinds of influence upon

* Job xxii.

us; love, joy, ſorrow, reſtraint, encouragement, reverence. However this influence is not immediately from our ſenſes, but from that knowlege. Thus ſuppoſe a perſon neither to ſee nor hear another, not to know by any of his ſenſes, but yet certainly to know that another was with him; this knowlege might, and in many caſes would, have one or more of the effects before-mentioned. It is therefor not only reaſonable, but alſo natural, to be affected with a preſence, though it be not the object of our ſenſes: whether it be or be not, is merely an accidental circumſtance, which needs not come into conſideration: it is the certainty that he is with us, and we with him, which hath the influence. We conſider perſons then as preſent, not only when they are within reach of our ſenſes, but alſo when we are aſſured by any other means that they are within ſuch a nearneſs; nay, if they are not, we can recall them to our mind, and be moved towards them at preſent: and muſt he, who is ſo much more intimately with us, that *in Him we live and move and have our being*, be thought too diſtant to be the object of our affections? We

own and feel the force of amiable and worthy qualities in our fellow-creatures: and can we be inſenſible to the contemplation of perfect goodneſs? Do we reverence the ſhadows of greatneſs here below, are we ſolicitous about honour and eſteem and the opinion of the world: and ſhall we not feel the ſame with reſpect to Him, whoſe are wiſdom and power in their original, who *is the God of judgment by whom actions are weighed?* Thus love, reverence, deſire of eſteem, every faculty, every affection, tends towards, and is employed about its reſpective object in common caſes: and muſt the exerciſe of them be ſuſpended with regard to him alone, who is an object, an infinitely more than adequate object, to our moſt exalted faculties; Him, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things?*

As we cannot remove from this earth, or change our general buſineſs on it; ſo neither can we alter our real nature. Therefor no exerciſe of the mind can be recommended, but only the exerciſe of thoſe faculties you are conſcious of. Religion does not demand new affections, but only claims the direction of thoſe

you already have, thoſe affections you daily feel; though unhappily confined to objects, not altogether unſuitable, but altogether unequal to them. We only repreſent to you the higher, the adequate objects of thoſe very faculties and affections. Let the man of ambition go on ſtill to conſider diſgrace as the greateſt evil; honour, as his chief good. But diſgrace, in whoſe eſtimation! honour, in whoſe judgment? This is the only queſtion. If ſhame, and delight in eſteem, be ſpoken of as real, as any ſettled ground of pain or pleaſure; both theſe muſt be in proportion to the ſuppoſed wiſdom and worth of him, by whom we are contemned or eſteemed. Muſt it then be thought enthuſiaſtical to ſpeak of a ſenſibility of this ſort, which ſhall have reſpect to an unerring judgment, to infinite wiſdom; when we are aſſured, this unerring judgment, this infinite wiſdom does obſerve upon our actions?

It is the ſame with reſpect to the love of God in the ſtricteſt and moſt confined ſenſe. We only offer and repreſent the higheſt object of an affection, ſuppoſed already in your mind. Some degree of goodneſs muſt be previouſly

ſuppoſed: this always implies the love of itſelf, an affection to goodneſs: the higheſt, the adequate object of this affection, is perfect goodneſs; which therefor we are to *love with all our heart, with all our ſoul, and with all our ſtrength*. "Muſt we then, forgetting our own "intereſt, as it were go out of ourſelves, and "love God for his own ſake?" No more forget your own intereſt, no more go out of yourſelves than when you prefer one place, one proſpect, the converſation of one man to that of another. Does not every affection neceſſarily imply, that the object of it be itſelf loved? If it be not, it is not the object of the affection. You may and ought if you can, but it is a great miſtake to think you can love or fear or hate any thing, from conſideration that ſuch love or fear or hatred may be a means of obtaining good or avoiding evil. But the queſtion, whether we ought to love God for his ſake or for our own, being a mere miſtake in language; the real queſtion, which this is miſtaken for, will, I ſuppoſe, be anſwered by obſerving that the goodneſs of God already exerciſed towards us, our preſent dependance

upon him, and our expectation of future benefits, ought, and have a natural tendency, to beget in us the affection of gratitude, and greater love towards him, than the ſame goodneſs exerciſed towards others: were it only for this reaſon, that every affection is moved in proportion to the ſenſe we have of the object of it; and we cannot but have a more lively ſenſe of goodneſs, when exerciſed towards ourſelves, than when exerciſed towards others. I added expectation of future benefits, becauſe the ground of that expectation is preſent goodneſs.

THUS Almighty God is the natural object of the ſeveral affections, love, reverence, fear, deſire of approbation. For though he is ſimply one, yet we cannot but conſider him in partial and different views. He is in himſelf one uniform being, and for ever the ſame without *variableneſs or ſhadow of turning:* but his infinite greatneſs, his goodneſs, his wiſdom, are different objects to our mind. To which is to be added, that from the changes in our own characters, together with his unchangea-

bleneſs, we cannot but conſider ourſelves as more or leſs the objects of his approbation, and really be ſo. For if he approves what is good; he cannot, merely from the unchangeableneſs of his nature, approve what is evil. Hence muſt ariſe more various movements of mind, more different kinds of affections. And this greater variety alſo is juſt and reaſonable in ſuch creatures as we are, though it reſpects a being ſimply one, good and perfect. As ſome of theſe affections are moſt particularly ſuitable to ſo imperfect a creature as man, in this mortal ſtate we are paſſing through; ſo there may be other exerciſes of mind, or ſome of theſe in higher degrees, our employment and happineſs in a ſtate of perfection.

CONSIDER then our ignorance, the imperfection of our nature, our virtue and our condition in this world, with reſpect to an infinitely good and juſt Being, our Creator and Governor; and you will ſee what religious affections of mind are moſt particularly ſuitable to this moral ſtate we are paſſing through.

THOUGH we are not affected with any thing

ſo ſtrongly, as what we diſcern with our ſenſes; and though our nature and condition require, that we be much taken up about ſenſible things; yet our reaſon convinces us that God is preſent with us, and we ſee and feel the effects of his goodneſs: he is therefor the object of ſome regards. The imperfection of our virtue, joined with the conſideration of his abſolute rectitude or holineſs, will ſcarce permit that perfection of love, which entirely caſts out all fear: yet goodneſs is the object of love to all creatures who have any degree of it themſelves; and conſciouſneſs of a real endeavour to approve ourſelves to him, joined with the conſideration of his goodneſs, as it quite excludes ſervile dread and horror, ſo it is plainly a reaſonable ground for hope of his favour. Neither fear, nor hope, nor love then are excluded: and one or another of theſe will prevail, according to the different views we have of God; and ought to prevail, according to the changes we find in our own character. There is a temper of mind made up of, or which follows from all three, fear, hope, love, namely, reſignation to the divine will, which

is the general temper belonging to this ſtate; which ought to be the habitual frame of our mind and heart, and to be exerciſed at proper ſeaſons more diſtinctly, in acts of devotion.

RESIGNATION to the will of God is the whole of piety: it includes in it all that is good, and is a ſource of the moſt ſettled quiet and compoſure of mind. There is the general principle of ſubmiſſion in our nature. Man is not ſo conſtituted as to deſire things, and be uneaſy in the want of them, in proportion to their known value: many other conſiderations come in to determine the degrees of deſire; particularly, whether the advantage we take a view of, be within the ſphere of our rank. Who ever felt uneaſineſs, upon obſerving any of the advantages brute creatures have over us? And yet it is plain they have ſeveral. It is the ſame with reſpect to advantages belonging to creatures of a ſuperior order. Thus, though we ſee a thing to be highly valuable, yet that it does not belong to our condition of being, is ſufficient to ſuſpend our deſires after it, to make us reſt ſatisfied without ſuch advantage. Now there is juſt the ſame reaſon

for quiet reſignation in the want of every thing equally unattainable, and out of our reach in particular, though others of our ſpecies be poſſeſſed of it. All this may be applied to the whole of life; to poſitive inconveniences as well as wants; not indeed to the ſenſations of pain and ſorrow, but to all the uneaſineſſes of reflection, murmuring and diſcontent. Thus is human nature formed to compliance, yielding, ſubmiſſion of temper. We find the principles of it within us; and every one exerciſes it towards ſome objects or other; that is, feels it with regard to ſome perſons, and ſome circumſtances. Now this is an excellent foundation of a reaſonable and religious reſignation. Nature teaches and inclines us to take up with our lot: the conſideration, that the courſe of things is unalterable, hath a tendency to quiet the mind under it, to beget a ſubmiſſion of temper to it. But when we can add, that this unalterable courſe is appointed and continued by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs; how abſolute ſhould be our ſubmiſſion, how entire our truſt and dependance!

THIS would reconcile us to our condition;

prevent all the ſupernumerary troubles ariſing from imagination, diſtant fears, impatience; all uneaſineſs, except that which neceſſarily ariſes from the calamities themſelves we may be under. How many of our cares ſhould we by this means be diſburdened of? Cares not properly our own, how apt ſoever they may be to intrude upon us, and we to admit of them; the anxieties of expectation, ſolicitude about ſucceſs and diſappointment, which in truth are none of our concern. How open to every gratification would that mind be, which was clear of theſe incumbrances?

Our reſignation to the will of God may be ſaid to be perfect, when our will is loſt and reſolved up into His; when we reſt in his will as our end, as being itſelf moſt juſt, and right, and good. And where is the impoſſibility of ſuch an affection to what is juſt, and right, and good, ſuch a loyalty of heart to the Governor of the univerſe, as ſhall prevail over all ſiniſter indirect deſires of our own? Neither is this at bottom any thing more than faith, and honeſty, and fairneſs of mind; in a more enlarged ſenſe indeed, than thoſe words are com-

monly uſed. And as, in common caſes, fear and hope and other paſſions are raiſed in us by their reſpective objects: ſo this ſubmiſſion of heart and ſoul and mind, this religious reſignation, would be as naturally produced by our having juſt conceptions of Almighty God, and a real ſenſe of his preſence with us. In how low a degree ſoever this temper uſually prevails amongſt men, yet it is a temper right in itſelf: it is what we owe to our Creator: it is particularly ſuitable to our mortal condition, and what we ſhould endeavour after for our own ſakes in our paſſage through ſuch a world as this; there is nothing upon which we can reſt or depend; nothing but what we are liable to be deceived and diſappointed in. Thus we might *acquaint ourſelves with God and be at peace*. This is piety and religion in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, conſidered as an habit of mind: an habitual ſenſe of God's preſence with us; being affected towards him, as preſent, in the manner his ſuperior nature requires from ſuch a creature as man: this is to *walk with God*.

LITTLE more need be ſaid of devotion or religious worſhip, than that it is this temper

exerted into act. The nature of it conſiſts in the actual exerciſe of thoſe affections towards God, which are ſuppoſed habitual in good men. He is always equally preſent with us: but we are ſo much taken up with ſenſible things, that, *Lo, He goeth by us, and we ſee him not: He paſſeth on alſo, but we perceive him not* *. Devotion is retirement, from the world he has made, to him alone: it is to withdraw from the avocations of ſenſe, to employ our attention wholly upon him as upon an object actually preſent, to yield ourſelves up to the influence of the divine preſence, and to give full ſcope to the affections of gratitude, love, reverence, truſt and dependance; of which infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs, is the natural and only adequate object. We may apply to the whole of devotion thoſe words of the ſon of Sirach: *When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as you can; for even yet will he far exceed: and when you exalt him, put forth all your ſtrength, and be not weary; for you can never go far enough* †. Our moſt raiſed affections of

* Job ix. 11. † Ecclus. xliii. 30.

every kind cannot but fall ſhort and be diſproportionate, when an infinite being is the object of them. This is the higheſt exerciſe and employment of mind, that a creature is capable of. As this divine ſervice and worſhip is itſelf abſolutely due to God, ſo alſo is it neceſſary in order to a further end, to keep alive upon our minds a ſenſe of his authority, a ſenſe that in our ordinary behaviour amongſt men we act under him as our governor and judge.

THUS you ſee the temper of mind reſpecting God, which is particularly ſuitable to a ſtate of imperfection; to creatures in a progreſs of being towards ſomewhat further.

SUPPOSE now this ſomething further attained; that we were arrived at it: what a perception will it be, to ſee and know and feel that our truſt was not vain, our dependance not groundleſs? That the iſſue, event, and conſummation came out ſuch as fully to juſtify and anſwer that reſignation? If the obſcure view of the divine perfection, which we have in this world, ought in juſt conſequence to beget an entire reſignation; what will this reſig-

nation be exalted into, when *we ſhall ſee face to face; and know as we are known?* If we cannot form any diſtinct notion of that perfection of the love of God, which *caſts out all fear;* of that enjoyment of him, which will be the happineſs of good men hereafter; the conſideration of our wants and capacities of happineſs, and that he will be an adequate ſupply to them, muſt ſerve us inſtead of ſuch diſtinct conception of the particular happineſs itſelf.

Let us then ſuppoſe a man entirely diſengaged from buſineſs and pleaſure, ſitting down alone and at leiſure, to reflect upon himſelf and his own condition of being. He would immediately feel that he was by no means compleat of himſelf, but totally inſufficient for his own happineſs. One may venture to affirm that every one hath felt this, whether he hath again reflected upon it or not. It is feeling this deficiency that they are unſatisfied with themſelves, which makes men look out for aſſiſtance from abroad; and which has given riſe to various kinds of amuſements, altogether needleſs any otherwiſe than as they ſerve to fill up the blank ſpaces of time, and ſo hinder their

feeling this deficiency, and being uneaſy with themſelves. Now, if theſe external things we take up with, were really an adequate ſupply to this deficiency of human nature, if by their means our capacities and deſires were all ſatisfied and filled up; then it might be truly ſaid, that we had found out the proper happineſs of man; and ſo might ſit down ſatisfied, and be at reſt in the enjoyment of it. But if it appears, that the amuſements, which men uſually paſs their time in, are ſo far from coming up to, or anſwering our notions and deſires of happineſs, or good, that they are really no more than what they are commonly called, ſomewhat to paſs away the time; that is, ſomewhat which ſerves to turn us aſide from, and prevent our attending to, this our internal poverty and want; if they tend only or chiefly, to ſuſpend, inſtead of ſatisfying our conceptions and deſires of happineſs; if the want remains, and we have found out little more than barely the means of making it leſs ſenſible; then are we ſtill to ſeek for ſomewhat to be an adequate ſupply to it. It is plain that there is a capacity in the nature of man, which nei-

ther riches nor honours, nor ſenſual gratifications, nor any thing in this world can perfectly fill up, or ſatisfy: there is a deeper and more eſſential want, than any of theſe things can be the ſupply of. Yet ſurely there is a poſſibility of ſomewhat, which may fill up all our capacities of happineſs; ſomewhat, which may be to us that ſatisfactory good we are inquiring after. But it cannot be any thing which is valuable only as it tends to ſome further end. Thoſe therefor who have got this world ſo much into their hearts, as not to be able to conſider happineſs as conſiſting in any thing but property and poſſeſſions, which are only valuable as the means to ſomewhat elſe, cannot have the leaſt glimpſe of the ſubject before us; which is the end, not the means; the thing itſelf, not ſomewhat in order to it. But if you can lay aſide that general, confuſed, undeterminate notion of happineſs, as conſiſting in ſuch poſſeſſions; and fix in your thoughts, that it really can conſiſt in nothing but in a faculty's having its proper object: you will clearly ſee, that in the cooleſt way of conſideration, without either the heat of fanciful enthuſiaſm,

or the warmth of real devotion, nothing is more certain, than that an infinite Being may himſelf be, if he pleaſes, the ſupply to all the capacities of our nature. All the common enjoyments of life are from the faculties he hath endued us with, and the objects he hath made ſuitable to them. He may himſelf be to us infinitely more than all theſe: he may be to us all that we want. As our underſtanding can contemplate itſelf, and our affections be exerciſed upon themſelves by reflection, ſo may each be employed in the ſame manner upon any other mind: and ſince the ſupreme Mind, the author and cauſe of all things, is the higheſt poſſible object to himſelf, he may be an adequate ſupply to all the faculties of our ſouls; a ſubject to our underſtanding, and an object to our affections.

Consider then: when we ſhall have put off this mortal body, when we ſhall be diveſted of ſenſual appetites, and thoſe poſſeſſions which are now the means of gratification ſhall be of no avail; when this reſtleſs ſcene of buſineſs and vain pleaſures ſhall be all over; we, our proper ſelf, ſhall ſtill remain: we ſhall ſtill con-

tinue the ſame creatures we are, with wants to be ſupplied, and capacities of happineſs. We muſt have faculties of perception, though not ſenſitive ones; and pleaſure or uneaſineſs from our perceptions, as now we have.

THERE are certain ideas, which we expreſs by the words, order, harmony, proportion, beauty, the furtheſt removed from any thing ſenſual. Now what is there in thoſe intellectual images, forms, or ideas, which begets that approbation, love, delight, and even rapture, which is ſeen in ſome perſon's faces upon having ſome objects preſent to their minds? ——"Mere enthuſiaſm!"—Be it what it will: there are objects, works of nature and of art, which all mankind have delight from, quite diſtinct from that affording gratification to ſenſual appetites; and from quite another view of them, than as being for their intereſt and farther advantage. The faculties from which we are capable of theſe pleaſures, and the pleaſures themſelves are as natural, and as much to be accounted for, as any ſenſual appetite whatever, and the pleaſure from its gratification. Words to be ſure are wanting u-

pon this ſubject: to ſay, that every thing of grace and beauty throughout the whole of nature, every thing excellent and amiable ſhared in differently lower degrees by the whole creation, meet in the author and cauſe of all things; this is an inadequate, and perhaps improper way of ſpeaking of the divine nature: but it is manifeſt that abſolute rectitude, the perfection of being, muſt be, in all ſenſes, and in every reſpect, the higheſt object to the mind.

In this world, it is only the effects of wiſdom and power and greatneſs, which we diſcern: it is not impoſſible, that hereafter the qualities themſelves, in the ſupreme Being, may be the immediate object of contemplation. What amazing wonders are opened to view by late improvements! what an object is the univerſe to a creature, if there be a creature who can comprehend its ſyſtem! But it muſt be an infinitely higher exerciſe of the underſtanding, to view the ſcheme of it in that mind, which projected it, before its foundations were laid. And ſurely we have meaning to the words, when we ſpeak of going further; and viewing, not only this ſyſtem in his mind, but the wiſ-

dom and intelligence itſelf from whence it proceeded. The ſame may be ſaid of power. But ſince wiſdom and power are not God, he is a wiſe, a powerful Being; the divine nature may therefor be a further object to the underſtanding. It is nothing to obſerve that our ſenſes give us but an imperfect knowlege of things: effects themſelves, if we knew them thoroughly, would give us but imperfect notions of wiſdom and power; much leſs of his being in whom they reſide. I am not ſpeaking of any fanciful notion of ſeeing all things in God; but only repreſenting to you, how much an higher object to the underſtanding an infinite Being himſelf is, than the things which he has made: and this is no more than ſaying, that the Creator is ſuperior to the works of his hands.

THIS may be illuſtrated by a low example. Suppoſe a machine, the ſight of which would raiſe, and diſcoveries in its contrivance gratify, our curioſity: the real delight, in this caſe, would ariſe from its being the effect of ſkill and contrivance. This ſkill in the mind of the artificer would be an higher object, if

we had any ſenſes or ways to diſcern it. For, obſerve, the contemplations of that principle, faculty or power which produced any effect, muſt be an higher exerciſe of the underſtanding, than the contemplation of the effect itſelf. The cauſe muſt be an higher object to the mind than the effect.

But whoever conſiders diſtinctly what the delight of knowlege is, will ſee reaſon to be ſatisfied that it cannot be the chief good of man: all this, as it is applicable, ſo it was mentioned with regard to the attribute of goodneſs. I ſay, goodneſs. Our being and all our enjoyments are the effects of it: juſt men bear its reſemblance: but how little do we know of the original, of what it is in itſelf? Recall what was before obſerved concerning the affection to moral characters; which in how low a degree ſoever, yet is plainly natural to man, and the moſt excellent part of his nature: ſuppoſe this improved, as it may be improved to any degree whatever, in the *ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*; and then ſuppoſe that they had a real view of that *righteouſneſs which is*

an everlaſting righteouſneſs; of the conformity of the divine will to the *law of truth*, in which the moral attributes of God conſiſt; of that goodneſs in the ſovereign mind, which gave birth to the univerſe: add, what will be true of all good men hereafter, a conſciouſneſs of having an intereſt in what they are contemplating; ſuppoſe them able to ſay, *This God is our God for ever and ever:* would they be any longer to ſeek for what was their chief happineſs, their final good? Could the utmoſt ſtretch of their capacities look further? Would not infinite perfect goodneſs be their very end, the laſt end and object of their affections; beyond which they could neither have, nor deſire; beyond which they could not form a wiſh or thought?

CONSIDER wherein that preſence of a friend conſiſts, which has often ſo ſtrong an effect, as wholly to poſſeſs the mind, and entirely ſuſpend all other affections and regards; and which itſelf affords the higheſt ſatisfaction and enjoyment. He is within reach of the ſenſes. Now, as our capacities of perception improve, we ſhall have, perhaps, by ſome faculty intirely

new, a perception of God's preſence with us in a nearer and ſtricter way; ſince it is certain he is more intimately preſent with us, than any thing elſe can be. Proof of the exiſtence and preſence of any being is quite different from the immediate perception, the conſciouſneſs of it. What then will be the joy of heart, which his preſence, and *the light of his countenance*, who is the life of the univerſe, will inſpire good men with, when they ſhall have a ſenſation, that he is the ſuſtainer of their being, that they exiſt in him; when they ſhall feel his influence to chear and enliven and ſupport their frame, in a manner of which we have now no conception? He will be in a literal ſenſe *their ſtrength and their portion for ever.*

When we ſpeak of things ſo much above our comprehenſion, as the employment and happineſs of a future ſtate, doubtleſs it behoves us to ſpeak with all modeſty and diſtruſt of ourſelves. But the ſcripture repreſents the happineſs of that ſtate under the notions of *ſeeing God*, *ſeeing him as he is*, *knowing as we are known*, and *ſeeing face to face*. Theſe words are not general or undetermined, but expreſs

a particular determinate happineſs. And I will be bold to ſay, that nothing can account for, or come up to theſe expreſſions, but only this, that God himſelf will be an object to our faculties, he himſelf will be our happineſs; as diſtinguiſhed from the enjoyments of the preſent ſtate, which ſeem to ariſe, not immediately from him, but from the objects he has adapted to give us delight.

To conclude: Let us ſuppoſe a perſon tired with care and ſorrow and the repetition of vain delights which fill up the round of life; ſenſible that every thing here below in its beſt eſtate is altogether vanity. Suppoſe him to feel that deficiency of human nature, before taken notice of; and to be convinced that God alone was the adequate ſupply to it. What could be more applicable to a good man, in this ſtate of mind; or better expreſs his preſent wants and diſtant hopes, his paſſage through this world as a progreſs towards a ſtate of perfection, than the following paſſages in the devotions of the royal prophet? They are plainly in an higher and more proper ſenſe applicable to this, than they could be to any thing elſe.

I have ſeen an end of all perfection. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee. My fleſh and my heart faileth: but God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Like as the hart deſireth the water-brooks; ſo longeth my ſoul after thee, O God. My ſoul is athirſt for God, yea, even for the living God: when ſhall I come to appear before him? How excellent is thy loving-kindneſs, O God! and the children of men ſhall put their truſt under the ſhadow of thy wings. They ſhall be ſatisfied with the plenteouſneſs of thy houſe: and thou ſhalt give them drink of thy pleaſures, as out of a river. For with thee is the well of life: and in thy light ſhall we ſee light. Bleſſed is the man whom thou chuſeſt, and receiveſt unto thee: he ſhall dwell in thy court, and ſhall be ſatisfied with the pleaſures of thy houſe, even of thy holy temple. Bleſſed is the people, O Lord, that can rejoice in thee: they ſhall walk in the light of thy countenance. Their delight ſhall be daily in thy name, and in thy righteouſneſs ſhall they make their boaſt. For thou art the glory of their ſtrength: and in thy loving-kindneſs they ſhall

be exalted. As for me, I will behold thy preſence in righteouſneſs: and when I awake up after thy likeneſs, I ſhall be ſatisfied with it. Thou ſhalt ſhew me the path of life; in thy preſence is the fulneſs of joy, and at thy right hand there is pleaſure for evermore.

SERMON XV.

Upon the Ignorance of MAN.

ECCLES. viii. 16. 17.

When I applied mine heart to know wiſdom, and to ſee the buſineſs that is done upon the earth: then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the ſun: becauſe though a man labour to ſeek it out, yet he ſhall not be able find it.

THE writings of Solomon are very much taken up with reflections upon human nature, and human life; to which he hath added, in this book, reflections upon the conſtitution of things. And it is not improbable, that the little ſatisfaction, and the great difficulties he met with in his reſearches into the general conſtitution of nature, might be the occaſion of his confining himſelf, ſo much as

he hath done, to life and conduct. However, upon that joint review he expreſſes great ignorance of the works of God, and the method of his providence in the government of the world; great labour and wearineſs in the ſearch and obſervation he had employed himſelf about; and great diſappointment, pain, and even vexation of mind, upon that which he had remarked of the appearances of things, and of what was going forward upon this earth. The whole review and inſpection, and the reſult of it, ſorrow, perplexity, a ſenſe of his neceſſary ignorance, ſuggeſts various reflections to his mind. But, notwithſtanding all this ignorance and diſſatisfaction, there is ſomewhat upon which he aſſuredly reſts and depends; ſomewhat, which is the concluſion of the whole matter, and the only concern of man. Following this his method and train of reflection, let us conſider,

I. THE aſſertion of the text, the ignorance of man; that the wiſeſt and moſt knowing cannot comprehend the ways of God: and then,

II. WHAT are the juſt conſequences of this

obſervation and knowlege of our own ignorance, and the reflections which it leads us to.

I. The wiſeſt and moſt knowing cannot comprehend the works of God, the methods and deſigns of his providence in the creation and government of the world.

Creation is abſolutely and entirely out of our depth, and beyond the extent of our utmoſt reach. And yet it is as certain that God made the world, as it is certain that effects muſt have a cauſe. It is indeed in general no more than effects, that the moſt knowing are acquainted with: for as to cauſes, they are as entirely in the dark as the moſt ignorant. What are the laws by which matter acts upon matter, but certain effects; which ſome, having obſerved to be frequently repeated, have reduced to general rules? The real nature and eſſence of beings likewiſe is what we are altogether ignorant of. All theſe things are ſo entirely out of our reach, that we have not the leaſt glimpſe of them. And we know little more of ourſelves, than we do of the world about us: how we were made, how our being is continued and preſerved, what the faculties of our minds

are, and upon what the power of exerciſing them depends. *I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my ſoul knoweth right well.* Our own nature, and the objects we are ſurrounded with, ſerve to raiſe our curioſity; but we are quite out of a condition of ſatisfying it. Every ſecret which is diſcloſed, every diſcovery which is made, every new effect which is brought to view, ſerves to convince us of numberleſs more which remain concealed, and which we had before no ſuſpicion of. And what if we were acquainted with the whole creation in the ſame way and as thoroughly as we are with any ſingle object of it? What would all this natural knowlege amount to? It muſt be a low curioſity indeed, which ſuch ſuperficial knowlege could ſatisfy. On the contrary, would it not ſerve to convince us of our ignorance ſtill; and to raiſe our deſire of knowing the nature of things themſelves, the author, the cauſe, and the end of them?

As to the government of the world: though from conſideration of the final cauſes which come within our knowlege; of characters, per-

ſonal merit and demerit; of the favour and diſapprobation, which reſpectively are due and belong to the righteous and the wicked, and which therefor muſt neceſſarily be in a mind which ſees things as they really are; though, I ſay, from hence we may know ſomewhat concerning the deſigns of providence in the government of the world, enough to enforce upon us religion and the practice of virtue: yet, ſince the monarchy of the univerſe is a dominion unlimited in extent, and everlaſting in duration; the general ſyſtem of it muſt neceſſarily be quite beyond our comprehenſion. And, ſince there appears ſuch a ſubordination and reference of the ſeveral parts to each other, as to conſtitute it properly one adminiſtration or government; we cannot have a thorough knowlege of any part, without knowing the whole. This ſurely ſhould convince us, that we are much leſs competent judges of the very ſmall part which comes under our notice in this world, than we are apt to imagine. *No heart can think upon theſe things worthily: and who is able to conceive his way? It is a tempeſt which no man can ſee: for the moſt part of his*

works are hid. Who can declare the works of his juſtice? for his covenant is afar off, and the trial of all things is in the end: that is, the dealings of God with the children of men are not yet completed, and cannot be judged of by that part which is before us. *So that a man cannot ſay, this is worſe than that: for in time they ſhall be well approved. Thy faithfulneſs, O Lord, reacheth unto the clouds: Thy judgments are like the great deep. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: alſo he hath ſet the world in their heart; ſo that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.* And thus St. Paul concludes a long argument upon the various diſpenſations of providence: *O the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowlege of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?*

THUS the ſcheme of providence, the ways and works of God, are too vaſt, of too large extent for our capacities. There is, as I may ſpeak, ſuch an expence of power, and wiſdom, and goodneſs, in the formation and govern-

ment of the world, as is too much for us to take in or comprehend. Power, and wiſdom, and goodneſs are manifeſt to us in all thoſe works of God, which come within our view: but there are likewiſe infinite ſtores of each poured forth throughout the immenſity of the creation; no part of which can be thoroughly underſtood, without taking in its reference and reſpect to the whole: and this is what we have not faculties for.

And as the works of God, and his ſcheme of government, are above our capacities thoroughly to comprehend: ſo there poſſibly may be reaſons whieh originally made it fit that many things ſhould be concealed from us, which we have perhaps natural capacities of underſtanding; many things concerning the deſigns, methods and ends of divine providence in the government of the world. There is no manner of abſurdity in ſuppoſing a veil on purpoſe drawn over ſome ſcenes of infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs, the ſight of which might ſome way or other ſtrike us too ſtrongly; or that better ends are deſigned and ſerved by their being concealed, than could be by

their being expoſed to our knowlege. The Almighty may caſt clouds and darkneſs round about him, for reaſons and purpoſes of which we have not the leaſt glimpſe or conception.

However, it is ſurely reaſonable, and what might have been expected, that creatures in ſome ſtage of their being, ſuppoſe in the infancy of it, ſhould be placed in a ſtate of diſcipline and improvement, where their patience and ſubmiſſion is to be tried by afflictions, where temptations are to be reſiſted, and difficulties gone through in the diſcharge of their duty. Now, if the greateſt pleaſures and pains of the preſent life may be overcome and ſuſpended, as they manifeſtly may, by hope and fear, and other paſſions and affections; then the evidence of religion, and the ſenſe of the conſequences of virtue and vice, might have been ſuch, as intirely in all caſes to prevail over thoſe afflictions, difficulties and temptations; prevail over them ſo, as to render them abſolutely none at all. But the very notion itſelf now mentioned, of a ſtate of diſcipline and improvement, neceſſarily excludes ſuch ſenſible evidence and conviction of religion, and of the conſequences

of virtue and vice. Religion conſiſts in ſubmiſſion and reſignation to the divine will. Our condition in this world is a ſchool of exerciſe for this temper: and our ignorance, the ſhallowneſs of our reaſon, the temptations, difficulties, afflictions which we are expoſed to, all equally contribute to make it ſo. The general obſervation may be carried on; and whoever will attend to the thing will plainly ſee, that leſs ſenſible evidence, with leſs difficulty in practice, is the ſame, as more ſenſible evidence, with greater difficulty in practice. Therefor difficulties in ſpeculation as much come into the notion of a ſtate of diſcipline, as difficulties in practice: and ſo the ſame reaſon or account is to be given of both. Thus, though it is indeed abſurd to talk of the greater merit of aſſent, upon little or no evidence, than upon demonſtration; yet the ſtrict diſcharge of our duty, with leſs ſenſible evidence, does imply in it a better character, than the ſame diligence in the diſcharge of it upon more ſenſible evidence. This fully accounts for and explains that aſſertion of our Saviour, * *Bleſ-*

* John xx. 29.

ſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed; have become chriſtians and obeyed the goſpel, upon leſs ſenſible evidence, than that which Thomas, to whom he is ſpeaking, inſiſted upon.

But after all, the ſame account is to be given, why we were placed in theſe circumſtances of ignorance, as why nature has not furniſhed us with wings; namely, that we were deſigned to be inhabitants of this earth. I am afraid we think too highly of ourſelves; of our rank in the creation, and what is due to us. What ſphere of action, what buſineſs is aſſigned to man, that he has not capacities and knowlege fully equal to? It is manifeſt he has reaſon, and knowlege, and faculties ſuperior to the buſineſs of the preſent world: faculties which appear ſuperfluous, if we do not take in the reſpect which they have to ſomewhat further, and beyond it. If to acquire knowlege were our proper end, we ſhould indeed be but poorly provided: but if ſomewhat elſe be our buſineſs and duty, we may, notwithſtanding our ignorance, be well enough furniſhed for

it; and the obſervation of our ignorance may be of aſſiſtance to us in the diſcharge of it.

II. Let us then conſider, what are the conſequences of this knowlege and obſervation of our own ignorance, and the reflection it leads to.

Firſt, We may learn from it, with what temper of mind a man ought to enquire into the ſubject of religion; namely, with expectation of finding difficulties, and with a diſpoſition to take up and reſt ſatisfied with any evidence whatever, which is real.

He ſhould before-hand expect things myſterious, and ſuch as he will not be able thoroughly to comprehend, or go to the bottom of. To expect a diſtinct comprehenſive view of the whole ſubject, clear of difficulties and objections, is to forget our nature and condition; neither of which admit of ſuch knowlege with reſpect to any ſcience whatever. And to enquire with this expectation, is not to enquire as a man, but as one of another order of creatures.

Due ſenſe of the general ignorance of man

would alſo beget in us a diſpoſition to take up and reſt ſatisfied with any evidence whatever, which is real. I mention this as the contrary to a diſpoſition, of which there are not wanting inſtances, to find fault with and reject evidence, becauſe it is not ſuch as was deſired. If a man were to walk by twilight, muſt he not follow his eyes as much as if it were broad day and clear ſunſhine? Or if he were obliged to take a journey by night, would he not *give heed to* any *light, ſhining in the darkneſs, till the day ſhould break and the day ſtar-ariſe?* It would not be altogether unnatural for him to reflect how much better it were to have daylight; he might perhaps have great curioſity to ſee the country round about him; he might lament that the darkneſs concealed many extended proſpects from his eyes, and wiſh for the ſun to draw away the veil: but how ridiculous would it be, to reject with ſcorn and diſdain the guidance and direction which that leſſer light might afford him, becauſe it was not the ſun itſelf! If the make and conſtitution of man, the circumſtances he is placed in, or the reaſon of things affords the leaſt hint or

or intimation, that virtue is the law he is born under; ſcepticiſm itſelf ſhould lead him to the moſt ſtrict and inviolable practice of it; that he may not make the dreadful experiment, of leaving the courſe of life marked out for him by nature, whatever that nature be, and entering paths of his own, of which he can know neither the dangers nor the end. For though no dangers be ſeen, yet darkneſs, ignorance and blindneſs are no manner of ſecurity.

Secondly, OUR ignorance is the proper anſwer to many things, which are called objections againſt religion; particularly, to thoſe which ariſe from the appearances of evil and irregularity in the conſtitution of nature and the government of the world. In all other caſes it is thought neceſſary to be thoroughly acquainted with the whole of the ſcheme, even one of ſo narrow a compaſs as thoſe which are formed by men, in order to judge of the goodneſs or badneſs of it: and the moſt ſlight and ſuperficial view of any human contrivance comes abundantly nearer to a thorough knowlege of it, than that part, which we know of the government of the world, does to the general ſcheme

and ſyſtem of it; to the whole ſet of laws by which it is governed. From our ignorance of the conſtitution of things, and the ſcheme of providence in the government of the world; from the reference the ſeveral parts have to each other, and to the whole; and from our not being able to ſee the end and the whole; it follows, that however perfect things are, they muſt even neceſſarily appear to us otherwiſe, leſs perfect than they are*.

* Suppoſe ſome very complicated piece of work, ſome ſyſtem or conſtitution, formed for ſome general end, to which each of the parts had a reference. The perfection or juſtneſs of this work or conſtitution would conſiſt in the reference and reſpect, which the ſeveral parts have to the general deſign. This reference of parts to the general deſign may be infinitely various, both in degree and kind. Thus one part may only contribute and be ſubſervient to another; this to a third; and ſo on through a long ſeries, the laſt part of which alone may contribute immediately and directly to the general deſign. Or a part may have this diſtant reference to the general deſign, and may alſo contribute immediately to it. For inſtance: if the general deſign or end, for which the complicated frame of nature was brought into being, is happineſs; whatever affords pre-

Thirdly, SINCE the conſtitution of nature, ſent ſatisfaction, and likewiſe tends to carry on the courſe of things, hath this double reſpect to the general deſign. Now, ſuppoſe a ſpectator of that work or conſtitution was in a great meaſure ignorant of ſuch various reference to the general end, whatever that end be; and that, upon a very ſlight and partial view which he had of the work, ſeveral things appeared to his eye as diſproportionate and wrong; others, juſt and beautiful: what would he gather from theſe appearances? He would immediately conclude that there was a probability, if he could ſee the whole reference of the parts appearing wrong to the general deſign, that this would deſtroy the appearance of wrongneſs and diſproportion: but there is no probability, that the reference would deſtroy the particular right appearances, though that reference might ſhew the thing already appearing juſt, to be ſo likewiſe in an higher degree or another manner. There is a probability, that the right appearances were intended: there is no probability, that the wrong appearances were. We cannot ſuſpect irregularity and diſorder to be deſigned. The pillars of a building appear beautiful; but their being likewiſe its ſupport does not deſtroy that beauty: there ſtill remains a reaſon to believe that the architect intended the beautiful appearance, after we have found out the reference, ſupport. It would be reaſonable for a man of himſelf to think thus, upon the firſt piece of architecture he ever ſaw.

and the methods and deſigns of providence in the government of the world, are above our comprehenſion, we ſhould acquieſce in, and reſt ſatisfied with, our ignorance; turn our thoughts from that which is above and beyond us, and apply ourſelves to that which is level to our capacities, and which is our real buſineſs and concern. Knowlege is not our proper happineſs. Whoever will in the leaſt attend to the thing, will ſee, that it is the gaining, not the having of it, which is the entertainment of the mind. Indeed, if the proper happineſs of man conſiſted in knowlege conſidered as a poſſeſſion or treaſure, men who are poſſeſſed of the largeſt ſhare would have a very ill time of it; as they would be infinitely more ſenſible than others, of their poverty in this reſpect. Thus, he who increaſes knowlege would eminently increaſe ſorrow. Men of deep reſearch and curious inquiry ſhould juſt be put in mind, not to miſtake what they are a doing. If their diſcoveries ſerve the cauſe of virtue and religion, in the way of proof, motive to practice, or aſſiſtance in it; or if they tend to render life leſs unhappy, and pro-

mote its ſatisfactions: they are moſt uſefully employed: but bringing things to light, alone and of itſelf, is of no manner of uſe, any otherwiſe than as an entertainment or diverſion. Neither is this at all amiſs, if it does not take up the time which ſhould be employed in better work. But it is evident that there is another mark ſet up for us to aim at; another end appointed us to direct our lives to: an end, which the moſt knowing may fail of, and the moſt ignorant arrive at. *The ſecret things belong unto the Lord our God; but thoſe things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.* Which reflection of Moſes, put in general terms, is, that the only knowlege which is of any avail to us, is that which teaches us our duty, or aſſiſts us in the diſcharge of it. The oeconomy of the univerſe, the courſe of nature, Almighty power exerted in creation and government of the world, is out of our reach? What would be the conſequence, if we could really get an inſight into theſe things, is very uncertain: whether it would aſſiſt us in, or divert us from what we had to do

in this preſent ſtate. If then there be a ſphere of knowlege, of contemplation and employment, level to our capacities, and of the utmoſt importance to us; we ought ſurely to apply ourſelves with all diligence to this our proper buſineſs, and eſteem every thing elſe nothing, nothing as to us, in compariſon of it. Thus, Job diſcourſing of natural knowlege, how much it is above us, and of wiſdom in general, ſays, *God underſtandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. And unto man he ſaid, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* Other orders of creatures may perhaps be let into the ſecret councils of heaven; and have the deſigns and methods of providence, in the creation and government of the world, communicated to them: but this does not belong to our rank or condition. *The fear of the Lord,* and *to depart from evil,* is the only wiſdom which man ſhould aſpire after, as his work and buſineſs. The ſame is ſaid, and with the ſame connexion and context, in the concluſion of the book of Eccleſiaſtes. Our ignorance, and the little we can know of other

things, affords a reaſon why we ſhould not perplex ourſelves about them: but no way invalidates that which is the *Concluſion of the whole matter, Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole concern of man.* So that Socrates was not the firſt, who endeavoured to draw men off from labouring after, and laying ſtreſs upon, other knowlege, in compariſon of that which related to morals. Our province is virtue and religion, life and manners; the ſcience of improving the temper, and making the heart better. This is the field aſſigned to us to cultivate: how much it has lain neglected is indeed aſtoniſhing. Virtue is demonſtrably the happineſs of man: it conſiſts in good actions, proceeding from a good principle, temper or heart. Overt-acts are entirely in our power. What remains is, that we learn to *keep our heart;* to govern and regulate our paſſions, mind, affections: that ſo we may be free from the impotencies of fear, envy, malice, covetouſneſs, ambition; that we may be clear of theſe, conſidered as vices ſeated in the heart, conſidered as conſtituting a general wrong

temper; from which general wrong frame of mind, all the miſtaken purſuits, and far the greateſt part of the unhappineſs of life, proceed. He, who ſhould find out one rule to aſſiſt us in this work, would deſerve infinitely better of mankind, than all the improvers of other knowlege put together.

Laſtly, LET us adore that infinite wiſdom and power and goodneſs, which is above our comprehenſion. *To whom hath the root of wiſdom been revealed? Or who hath known her wiſe counſels? There is one wiſe and greatly to be feared; the Lord ſitting upon his throne. He created her, and ſaw her, and numbered her, and poured her out upon all his works.* If it be thought a conſiderable thing, to be acquainted with a few, a very few, of the effects of infinite power and wiſdom; the ſituation, bigneſs, and revolution of ſome of the heavenly bodies; what ſentiments ſhould our minds be filled with concerning him, who appointed to each its place and meaſure and ſphere of motion, all which are kept with the moſt uniform conſtancy? *Who ſtretched out the heavens, and telleth the number of the ſtars, and calleth them all*

by their names. Who laid the foundations of the earth, who comprehendeth the duſt of it in a meaſure, and weigheth the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance. And, when we have recounted all the appearances which come within our view, he muſt add, *Lo, theſe are part of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? Canſt thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canſt thou do? deeper than hell; what canſt thou know?*

THE concluſion is, that in all lowlineſs of mind we ſet lightly by ourſelves: that we form our temper to an implicit ſubmiſſion to the divine Majeſty; beget within ourſelves abſolute reſignation to all the methods of his providence, in his dealings with the children of men: that, in the deepeſt humility of our ſouls, we proſtrate ourſelves before him, and join in that celeſtial ſong; *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; juſt and true are thy ways, thou king of ſaints: Who ſhall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?*

A

SERMON

Preached before the

Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Goſpel in foreign Parts.

At their Anniverſary Meeting in the Pariſh Church of St. Mary le-bow.

On Friday, February 16, 1738-9.

MATT. xxiv. 14.

And this goſpel of the kingdom ſhall be preached in all the world, for a witneſs unto all nations.

THE general doctrine of religion, that all things are under the direction of one righteous Governor, having been eſtabliſhed

by repeated revelations in the firſt ages of the world, was left with the bulk of mankind, to be honeſtly preſerved pure and intire, or careleſsly forgotten, or wilfully corrupted. And though reaſon, almoſt intuitively, bare witneſs to the truth of this moral ſyſtem of nature, yet it ſoon appeared, that *They did not like to retain God in their knowlege* *, as to any purpoſes of real piety. Natural religion became gradually more and more darkened with ſuperſtition, little underſtood, leſs regarded in practice; and the face of it ſcarce diſcernible at all, in the religious eſtabliſhments of the moſt learned, polite nations. And how much ſoever could have been done towards the revival of it by the light of reaſon, yet this light could not have diſcovered what ſo nearly concerned us, that important part in the ſcheme of this world, which regards a Mediator; nor how far the ſettled conſtitution of its government admitted, repentance to be accepted for remiſſion of ſins; after the obſcure intimations of theſe things, from tradition, were corrupted or

* Rom. i. 28.

forgotten. One people indeed had clearer notices of them, together with the natural ſcheme of natural religion, preſerved in the primitive and ſubſequent revelations committed to their truſt; and were deſigned to be a witneſs of God, and a providence to the nations around them: but this people alſo had corrupted themſelves and their religion to the higheſt degree, that was conſiſtent with keeping up the form of it.

In this ſtate of things, when infinite wiſdom ſaw proper, the general doctrine of religion was authoritatively publiſhed in its purity; and the particular diſpenſation of providence, which this world is under, manifeſted to all men, even * *the diſpenſation of the name of God* towards us, as ſinful, loſt creatures, to be recovered by repentance through a Mediator, who was † *to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs*, and at length eſtabliſh that new ſtate of things foretold by the prophet Daniel, under the character of ‖ *a kingdom, which the God of heaven*

* Eph. iii. 2. † Dan. ix. 24. ‖ ii. 44.

would ſet up, and which ſhould never be deſtroyed. This, including a more diſtinct account of the inſtituted means, whereby Chriſt the Mediator would *gather together in one, the children of God, that were ſcattered abroad**, and conduct them to *the place he is gone to prepare for them*†; is *the goſpel of the kingdom*, which he here foretells, and elſewhere commands, ſhould *be preached in all the world for a witneſs unto all nations.* And it *firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will*‡: by which means it was ſpread very widely among the nations of the world, and became *a witneſs unto them.*

When thus much was accompliſhed, as there is a wonderful uniformity in the conduct of providence, chriſtianity was left with chriſtians, to be tranſmitted down pure and genuine, or to be corrupted and ſunk; in like manner as

* John xi. 52. † John. xiv. 2, 3 ‡ Heb. ii. 3, 4.

the religion of nature had been before left with mankind in general. There was however this difference, that by an inſtitution of external religion fitted for all men, (conſiſting in a common form of chriſtian worſhip, together with a ſtanding miniſtry of inſtruction and diſcipline) it pleaſed God to unite chriſtians in communities or viſible churches, and all along to preſerve them, over a great part of the world; and thus perpetuate a general publication of the goſpel. For theſe communities, which together make up the catholic viſible church, are, *firſt*, the repoſitories of the written oracles of God; and in every age have preſerved and publiſhed them, in every country, where the profeſſion of chriſtianity has obtained. Hence it has come to paſs, and it is a thing very much to be obſerved in the appointment of providence, that even ſuch of theſe communities, as, in a long ſucceſſion of years, have corrupted chriſtianity the moſt, have yet continually carried, together with their corruptions, the confutations of them: for they have every where preſerved the pure original ſtandard of it, the

ſcripture, to which recourſe might have been had, both by the deceivers and the deceived, in every ſucceſſive age. *Secondly*, any particular church, in whatever place eſtabliſhed, is like *a city that is ſet on an hill which cannot be hid**, inviting all who paſs by to enter into it. All perſons to whom any notices of it come, have, in ſcripture language, the *kingdom of God come nigh unto him*. They are reminded of that religion, which natural conſcience atteſts the truth of: and they may, if they will, be inſtructed in it more diſtinctly, and likewiſe in the gracious means, whereby ſinful creatures may obtain eternnl life; that chief and final good, which all men, in proportion to their underſtanding and integrity, even in all ages and countries of the heathen world, were ever in purſuit of. And *laſtly*, out of theſe churches have all along gone forth perſons, who have preached the goſpel in remote places, with greater or leſs good effect: for the eſtabliſhment of any profeſſion of chriſtianity, however corrupt, I call a good effect, whilſt

* Matth. v. 14.

accompanied with a continued publication of the ſcripture, notwithſtanding it may for ſome time lie quite neglected.

FROM theſe things, it may be worth obſerving by the way, appears the weakneſs of all pleas for neglecting the public ſervice of the church. For though a man prays with as much devotion and leſs interruption at home, and reads better ſermons there, yet, that will by no means excuſe the neglect of his appointed part in keeping up the profeſſion of chriſtianity amongſt mankind. And this neglect, were it univerſal, muſt be the diſſolution of the whole viſible church, that is, of all chriſtian communities: and ſo muſt prevent thoſe good purpoſes, which were intended to be anſwered by them; and which they have, all along, anſwered over the world. For we ſee, that by their means, the event foretold in the text, which began in the preaching of Chriſt and the apoſtles, has been carried on, more or leſs, ever ſince, and is ſtill carrying on; theſe being the providential means of its progreſs. And it is, I ſuppoſe, the completion of this event, which St. John had a repreſentation of, under

the figure of *an angel flying in the midſt of heaven, having the everlaſting goſpel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people**.

Our Lord adds in the text, that this ſhould be *for a witneſs unto them:* for an evidence of their duty, and an admonition to perform it. But what would be the effect, or ſucceſs of the general preaching of the goſpel, is not here mentioned. And therefor the prophecy of the text is not parallel to thoſe others in ſcripture, which ſeem to foretel the glorious eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in the laſt days: nor does it appear that they are coincident; otherwiſe than as the former of theſe events muſt be ſuppoſed preparatory to the latter. Nay, it is not ſaid here, that *God willeth all men ſhould be ſaved, and come unto the knowlege of the truth*†: though this is the language of ſcripture elſewhere. The text declares no more, than that it was the appointment of God, in his righteous government over the world, that *the goſpel of the kingdom ſhould be preached for a witneſs unto it.*

* Rev. xiv. 6. † 1 Tim. ii. 4.

THE viſible conſtitution and courſe of nature, the moral law written in our hearts, the poſitive inſtitutions of religion, and even any memorial of it, are all ſpoken of in ſcripture under this, or the like denomination: ſo are the prophets, apoſtles, and our Lord himſelf. They are all *witneſſes*, for the moſt part unregarded witneſſes, in behalf of God, to mankind. They inform us of his being and providence, and of the particular diſpenſation of religion, which we are under; and continually remind us of them. And they are equally witneſſes of theſe things, whether we regard them or not. Thus after a declaration, that Ezekiel ſhould be ſent with a divine meſſage to the children of Iſrael, it is added, *and they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious houſe) yet ſhall know that there hath been a prophet among them**. And our Lord directs the ſeventy diſciples, upon their departure from any city which refuſed to receive them, to declare, *Notwithſtanding, be you ſure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh*

* Ezek. ii. 5, 7.

unto you *. The thing intended in both theſe paſſages is, that which is expreſſed in the text by the word, *witneſs*. And all of them together evidently ſuggeſt thus much, that the purpoſes of providence are carried on, by the preaching of the goſpel to thoſe who reject it, as well as to thoſe who embrace it. It is indeed true, *God willeth that all men ſhould be ſaved:* yet, from the unalterable conſtitution of his government, the ſalvation of every man cannot but, depend upon his behaviour, and therefor cannot but depend upon himſelf; and is neceſſarily his own concern, in a ſenſe, in which it cannot be another's. All this the ſcripture declares, in a manner the moſt forcible and alarming: *Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wiſe may be profitable unto himſelf? Is it any pleaſure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makeſt thy way perfect* †? *If thou ſhalt be wiſe, thou ſhalt be wiſe for thyſelf: but if thou ſcorneſt, thou alone ſhalt bear it* ‡. *He that heareth, let him hear; and he*

* Luke x. 11. † Job. xxii. 2, 3. ‡ Prov. ix. 12.

that forbeareth let him forbear *. And again, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear: But if any man be ignorant*, that is, wilfully, *let him be ignorant* †. To the ſame purpoſe are thoſe awful words of the angel, in the perſon of him, to whom *all judgment is committed* ‡: *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill: and he that is righteous let him be righteous ſtill: and he that is holy, let him be holy ſtill. And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work ſhall be* ‖. The righteous government of the world muſt be carried on; and, of neceſſity, men ſhall remain the ſubjects of it, by being examples of its mercy, or of its juſtice. *Life and death are ſet before them, and whether they like ſhall be given unto them* §. They are to make their choice, and abide by it: but which ſoever their choice be, the goſpel is equally a *witneſs* to them; and the purpoſes of providence are anſwered by this *witneſs* of the goſpel.

FROM the foregoing view of things we ſhould

* Ezek. iii. 27. † 1 Cor. xiv. 38. ‡ John. v. 22.
‖ Rev. xxii. 11, 12. § Eccluſ. xv. 18.

be reminded, that the ſame reaſons which make it our duty to inſtruct the ignorant in the relation, which the light of nature ſhews they ſtand in to God their Maker, and in the obligations of obedience, reſignation and love to him, which ariſe out of that relation; make it our duty likewiſe to inſtruct them in all thoſe other relations, which revelation informs us of, and in the obligations of duty, which ariſe out of them. And the reaſons for inſtructing men in both theſe, are of the very ſame kind, as for communicating any uſeful knowlege whatever. God, if he had ſo pleaſed, could indeed miraculouſly have revealed every religious truth which concerns mankind, to every individual man; and ſo he could have every common truth; and thus have ſuperſeded all uſe of human teaching in either. Yet he has not done this: but has appointed, that men ſhould be inſtructed by the aſſiſtance of their fellow-creatures, in both. Further: though all knowlege from reaſon is as really from God, as revelation is: yet this laſt is a diſtinguiſhed favour to us, and naturally ſtrikes us with the greateſt awe, and carries in it an

aſſurance, that thoſe things which we are informed of by it, are of the utmoſt importance to us to be informed of. Revelation therefor, as it demands to be received with a regard and reverence peculiar to itſelf; ſo it lays us under obligations, of a like peculiar ſort, to communicate the light of it. Further ſtill: it being an indiſpenſible law of the geſpel, that chriſtians ſhould unite in religious communities, and theſe being intended for * repoſitaries of the written *oracles of God*, for ſtanding memorials of religion to unthinking men, and for the propagation of it in the world; chriſtianity is very particularly to be conſidered as a truſt, depoſited with us in behalf of others, in behalf of mankind, as well as for our own inſtruction. No one has a right to be called a chriſtian, who doth not do ſomewhat in his ſtation, towards the diſcharge of his truſt; who doth not, for inſtance, aſſiſt in keeping up the profeſſion of chriſtianity where he lives. And it is an obligation but little more

* Page 129, 130.

remote, to aſſiſt in doing it in our factories abroad; and in the colonies to which we are related, by their being peopled from our own mother-country, and ſubjects, indeed very neceſſary ones, to the ſame government with ourſelves: and nearer yet is the obligation upon ſuch perſons in particular, as have the intercourſe of an advantageous commerce with them.

Of theſe our colonies, the ſlaves ought to be conſidered as inferiour members, and therefor to be treated as members of them; and not merely as cattle or goods, the property of their maſters. Nor can the higheſt property, poſſible to be acquired in theſe ſervants, cancel the obligation to take care of their religious inſtruction. Deſpicable as they may appear in our eyes, they are the creatures of God, and of the race of mankind, for whom Chriſt died: and it is inexcuſable to keep them in ignorance of the end for which they were made; and the means, whereby they may become partakers of the general redemption. On the contrary, if the neceſſity of the caſe requires, that they may be treated with the very utmoſt ri-

gour, that humanity will at all permit, as they certainly are; and, for our advantage, made as miſerable as they well can be in the preſent world; this ſurely heightens our obligation to put them into as advantageous a ſituation as we are able, with regard to another.

THE like charity we owe to the natives; owe to them in a much ſtricter ſenſe than we are apt to conſider, were it only from neighbourhood, and our having gotten poſſeſſions in their country. For incidental circumſtances of this kind appropriate all the general obligations of charity to particular perſons; and make ſuch and ſuch inſtances of it, the duty of one man rather than another. We are moſt ſtrictly bound to conſider theſe poor unformed creatures, as being, in all reſpects, of one family with ourſelves, the family of mankind; and inſtruct them in our *common ſalvation**: that they may not paſs through this ſtage of their being like brute beaſts; but be put into a capacity of moral improvements, how low ſoever they muſt remain as to others, and ſo

* Jude 3.

into a capacity of qualifying themſelves for an higher ſtate of life hereafter.

All our affairs ſhould be carried on in the fear of God, in ſubſerviency to his honour, and the good of mankind. And thus navigation and commerce ſhould be conſecrated to the ſervice of religion, by being made the means of propagating it in every country, with which we have any intercourſe. And the more widely we endeavour to ſpread its light and influence, as the forementioned circumſtances, and others of a like kind, open and direct our way, the more faithful ſhall we be judged in the diſcharge of that truſt*, which is committed to us as chriſtians, when our Lord ſhall require an account of it.

And it may be ſome encouragement to chearful perſeverance in theſe endeavours, to obſerve, not only that they are our duty, but alſo that they ſeem the means of carrying on a great ſcheme of providence, which ſhall certainly be accompliſhed. *For the everlaſting Goſpel ſhall be preached to every nation*†: and

* Page 137. † Rev. xiv. 6.

*the kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt**.

However, we ought not to be diſcouraged in this good work, though its future ſucceſs were leſs clearly foretold; and though its effects now, in reforming mankind, appeared to be as little as our adverſaries pretend. They indeed, and perhaps ſome others, ſeem to require more, than either experience or ſcripture gave ground to hope for, in the preſent courſe of the world. But the bare eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in any place, even the external form and profeſſion of it, is a very important and valuable effect. It is a ſerious call upon men to attend to the natural, and the revealed doctrine of religion. It is a ſtanding publication of the goſpel, and renders it a *witneſs* to them: and by this means the purpoſes of providence are carrying on with regard to remote ages, as well as to the preſent. *Caſt thy bread upon the waters: for thou ſhalt find it after many days. In the morning ſow thy ſeed, and in the evening withhold not thine*

* Rev. xi. 15.

*hand: for thou knoweſt not whether ſhall proſper, either this or that, or whether they both ſhall be alike good**. We can look but a very little way into the connexions and conſequences of things: our duty is to ſpread the *incorruptible ſeed* as widely as we can, and leave it to *God to give the increaſe*†. Yet thus much we may be almoſt aſſured of, that the goſpel wherever it is planted, will have its genuine effect upon ſome few; upon more perhaps than are taken notice of in the hurry of the world. There are, at leaſt, a few perſons in every country and ſucceſſive age, ſcattered up and down, and mixt among the reſt of mankind; who, not being corrupted paſt amendment, but having within them the principles of recovery, will be brought to a moral and religious ſenſe of things, by the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity where they live: and then will be influenced by the peculiar doctrines of it, in proportion to the integrity of their minds; and to the clearneſs, purity and evidence, with which it is offered them. Of theſe our Lord ſpeaks in the parable of the Sower, *as under-*

* Eccleſ. xi. 1, 6. † 1 Cor. iii. 6.

*ſtanding the word, and bearing fruit, and bringing forth, ſome an hundred fold, ſome ſixty, ſome thirty**. One might add, that theſe perſons, in proportion to their influence, do at preſent better the ſtate of things: better it even in the civil ſenſe, by giving ſome check to that avowed profligateneſs, which is a contradiction to all order and government; and, if not checkt, muſt be the ſubverſion of it.

THESE important purpoſes, which are certainly to be expected from the good work before us, may ſerve to ſhew, how little weight there is in that objection againſt it, from the want of thoſe miraculous aſſiſtances, with which the firſt preachers of chriſtianity proved its truth. The plain ſtate of the caſe is, that the goſpel, though it be not in the ſame degree a *witneſs* to all, who have it made known to them; yet in ſome degree is ſo to all. Miracles to the ſpectators of them, are intuitive proofs of its truth: but the bare preaching of it is a ſerious admonition to all who hear it, to attend to the notices which God has given of himſelf by the light of nature; and, if chri-

* Matth. xiii. 23.

ſtianity be preached with its proper evidence, to ſubmit to its peculiar diſcipline and laws; if not, to enquire honeſtly after its evidence, in proportion to their capacities. And there are perſons of ſmall capacities for enquiry and examination, who yet are wrought upon by it, to *deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world**, in expectation of a future judgment by Jeſus Chriſt. Nor can any chriſtian, who underſtands his religion, object, that theſe perſons are not chriſtians without evidence: for he cannot be ignorant who has declared, that *if any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doctrine whether it be of God*†. And, ſince the whole end of chriſtianity is to influence the heart and actions, were an unbeliever to object in that manner, he ſhould be aſked, whether he would think it to the purpoſe to object againſt perſons of like capacities, that they are prudent without evidence, when, as often the caſe, they are obſerved to manage their worldly affairs with diſcretion?

THE deſign before ue being therefor in ge-

* Titus ii. 12, 13. † Rom. vii. 17.

neral unexceptionably good, it were much to be wiſhed, that ſerious men of all denominations would join in it. And let me add, that the foregoing view of things affords diſtinct reaſons why they ſhould. For, firſt, by ſo doing, they aſſiſt in a work of the moſt uſeful importance, that of ſpreading over the world the ſcripture itſelf, as a divine revelation: and it cannot be ſpread under this character, for a continuance, in any country, unleſs chriſtian churches be ſupported there; but will always more or leſs, ſo long as ſuch churches ſubſiſt: and therefor their ſubſiſtence ought to be provided for. In the next place, they ſhould remember, that if chriſtianity is to be propagated at all, which they acknowlege it ſhould, it muſt be in ſome particular form of profeſſion. And though they think ours liable to objections, yet it is poſſible they themſelves may be miſtaken: and whether they are or no, the very nature of ſociety requires ſome compliance with others. And whilſt, together with our particular form of chriſtianity, the confeſſed ſtandard of chriſtian religion, the ſcripture is

ſpread; and eſpecially whilſt every one is freely allowed to ſtudy it, and worſhip God according to his conſcience; the evident tendency is, that genuine chriſtianity will be underſtood and prevail. Upon the whole therefor, theſe perſons would do well to conſider, how far they can with reaſon ſatisfy themſelves in neglecting what is certainly right, on account of what is doubtful, whether it be wrong; and when the right is of ſo much greater conſequence one way, than the ſuppoſed wrong can be the other.

To conclude: Atheiſtical immorality and profaneneſs, ſurely, is not better in itſelf, nor leſs contrary to the deſign of revelation, than ſuperſtition. Nor is ſuperſtition the diſtinguiſhing vice of the preſent age; either at home, or abroad. But if our colonies abroad are left without a public religion, and the means of inſtruction, what can be expected, but that from living in a continued forgetfulneſs of God, they will at length ceaſe to believe in him; and ſo ſink into ſtupid atheiſm? And there is too apparent danger of the like horrible depravity at home, without the like excuſe for it. In-

deed amongſt creatures naturally formed for religion, yet ſo much under the powers of imagination, ſo apt to deceive themſelves, and ſo liable to be deceived by others, as men are; ſuperſtition is an evil which can never be out of ſight. But even againſt this, true religion is a great ſecurity; and the only one. True religion takes up that place in the mind, which ſuperſtition would uſurp, and ſo leaves little room for it; and likewiſe lays us under the ſtrongeſt obligations to oppoſe it. On the contrary, the danger of ſuperſtition cannot but be increaſed by the prevalence of irreligion: and by its general prevalence, the evil will be unavoidable. For the common people, wanting a religion, will of courſe take up with almoſt any ſuperſtition, which is thrown in their way: and, in proceſs of time, amidſt the infinite viciſſitudes of the political world, the leaders of parties will certainly be able to ſerve themſelves of that ſuperſtition, whatever it be, which is getting ground; and will not fail to carry it on to the utmoſt length their occaſions require. The general nature of the thing ſhews this: and hiſtory and fact

confirm it. But what brings the obſervation home to ourſelves is, that the great ſuperſtition of which this nation, in particular, has reaſon to be afraid, is imminent; and the ways in which we may, very ſuppoſeably, be overwhelmed by it, obvious. It is therefor wonderful, thoſe people who ſeem to think there is but one evil in life, that of ſuperſtition, ſhould not ſee, that atheiſm and profaneneſs muſt be the introduction of it. So that in every view of things, and upon all accounts, irreligion is at preſent our chief danger. Now the ſeveral religious aſſociations among us, in which many good men have of late united, appear to be providentially adapted to this preſent ſtate of the world. And as all good men are equally concerned in promoting the end of them; to do it more effectually, they ought to unite in promoting it: which yet is ſcarce practicable upon any new models, and quite impoſſible upon ſuch as every one would think unexceptionable. They ought therefor to come into thoſe already formed to their hands; and even take advantage of any occaſion of union, to add mutual force to each other's endeavours

in furthering their common end; however they may differ as to the beſt means, or any thing elſe, ſubordinate to it. Indeed there are well-diſpoſed perſons, who much want to be admoniſhed, how dangerous a thing it is, to diſcountenance what is good, becauſe it is not better; and hinder what they approve, by raiſing prejudices againſt ſome under-part of it. Nor can they aſſiſt in rectifying what they think capable of amendment, in the manner of carrying on theſe deſigns, unleſs they will join in the deſigns themſelves; which they muſt acknowlege to be good and neceſſary ones. For what can be called good and neceſſary by chriſtians, if it be not ſo, to ſupport chriſtianity where it muſt otherwiſe ſink, and propagate it, where it muſt otherwiſe be unknown; to reſtrain abandoned, barefaced vice, by making uſeful examples, at leaſt of ſhame, perhaps of repentance; and to take care of the education of ſuch children, as otherwiſe muſt be even educated in wickedneſs, and trained up to deſtruction? Yet good men ſeparately can do nothing, proportionable to what is wanting, in any of theſe ways: but their common, united

endeavours may do a great deal in all of them.

And beſides the particular purpoſes, which theſe ſeveral religious aſſociations ſerve; the more general ones, which they all ſerve, ought not to be paſſed over. Every thing of this kind is, in ſome degree, a ſafeguard to religion; an obſtacle, more or leſs, in the way of thoſe who want to have it extirpated out of the world. Such ſocieties alſo contribute more eſpecially towards keeping up the face of chriſtianity among ourſelves; and by their obtaining here, the goſpel is rendered more and more a *witneſs* to us.

And if it were duly attended to, and had its genuine influence upon our minds, there would be no need of perſuaſions to impart the bleſſing: nor would the means of doing it be wanting. Indeed the preſent income of this ſociety, which depends upon voluntary contributions, with the moſt frugal management of it, can in no ways ſufficiently anſwer the bare purpoſes of our charter: but the nation, or even this opulent city itſelf, has it in its power to do ſo very much more, that I fear the mention

of it may be thought too ſevere a reproof, ſince ſo little is done. But if the goſpel had its proper influence upon the chriſtian world in general, as it is the centre of trade and ſeat of learning, a very few ages, in all probability, would ſettle chriſtianity in every country, without miraculous aſſiſtances. For ſcarce any thing elſe, I am perſuaded, would be wanting to effect this, but laying it before men in its divine ſimplicity, together with an exemplification of it in the lives of chriſtian nations. *The unlearned and unbelievers, falling down on their faces, would worſhip God, and report that God is in us of a truth**.

* 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, the Sheriffs, and the Governors of the ſeveral Hoſpitals of the City of London,

At the Pariſh Church of St. Bridget.

On Monday, in Eaſter-Week, 1740.

PROV. xxii. 2.

The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.

THE conſtitution of things being ſuch, that the labour of one man, or the united labour of ſeveral, is ſufficient to procure more neceſſaries than he or they ſtand in need

of, which it may be ſuppoſed was, in ſome degree, the caſe, even in the firſt ages; this immediately gave room for riches to ariſe in the world, and for men's acquiring them by honeſt means; by diligence, frugality, and prudent management, Thus ſome would very ſoon acquire greater plenty of neceſſaries than they had occaſion for. And others by contrary means, or by croſs accidents, would be in want of them. And he, who ſhould ſupply their wants, would have the property in a proportionable labour of their hands; which he would ſcarce fail to make uſe of, inſtead of his own, or perhaps together with them, to provide future neceſſaries in greater plenty. Riches then were firſt beſtowed upon the world, as they are ſtill continued in it, by the bleſſing of God upon the induſtry of men, in the uſe of their underſtanding and ſtrength. Riches themſelves have always this ſource; though the poſſeſſion of them is conveyed to particular perſons by different channels. Yet ſtill, *the hand of the diligent maketh rich* *, and, other circumſtances being equal, in proportion to its diligence.

* Prov. x. 4.

But to return to the firſt rich man; whom we left in poſſeſſion of dependents, and plenty of neceſſaries for himſelf and them. A family would not be long in this ſtate, before conveniencies, ſomewhat ornamental, and for entertainment, would be wanted, looked for, and found out. And by degrees, theſe ſecondary wants, and inventions for the ſupply of them, the fruits of leiſure and eaſe, come to employ much of men's time and labour. Hence a new ſpecies of riches came into the world, conſiſting of things which it might have done well enough without, yet thought deſirable, as affording pleaſure to the imagination, or the ſenſes. And theſe went on increaſing, till, at length, the ſuperfluities of life took in a vaſtly larger compaſs of things, than the neceſſaries of it. Thus luxury made its inroad, and all the numerous train of evils, its attendants; of which poverty, as bad an one as we may account it, is far from being the worſt. Indeed the hands of the generality muſt be employed: and a very few of them would now be ſufficient to provide the world with neceſſaries: and therefor the reſt of them muſt be employed about what may

be called ſuperfluities; which could not be, if theſe ſuperfluities were not made uſe of. Yet the deſire of ſuch things, inſenſibly, becomes immoderate, and the uſe of them, almoſt of courſe, degenerates into luxury; which, in every age, has been the diſſipation of riches, and, in every ſenſe, the ruin of thoſe who were poſſeſſed of them: and therefor cannot be too much guarded againſt by all opulent cities. And as men ſink into luxury, as much from faſhion, as direct inclination, the richer ſort together may eaſily reſtrain this vice, in almoſt what degree they pleaſe: and a few of the chief of them may contribute a great deal towards the reſtraining it.

It is to be obſerved further concerning the progreſs of riches, that had they continued to conſiſt only in the poſſeſſion of the things themſelves, which were neceſſary, and of the things themſelves, which were, upon their own account, otherwiſe deſirable; this, in ſeveral reſpects, muſt have greatly embarraſſed trade and commerce; and have ſet bounds to the increaſe of riches in all hands, as well as have confined them in the hands of a few. But, in

proceſs of time, it was agreed to ſubſtitute ſomewhat more laſting and portable, which ſhould paſs every where, in commerce, for real natural riches; as ſounds had before, in language, been ſubſtituted for thoughts. And this general agreement (by what means ſoever it became general) that money ſhould anſwer all things, together with ſome other improvements, gave full ſcope for riches to encreaſe in the hands of particular perſons, and likewiſe to circulate into more hands. Now this, tho' it was not the firſt origin of covetouſneſs, yet it gives greater ſcope, encouragement and temptation to covetouſneſs than it had before. And there is moreover the appearance, that this artificial kind of riches, money, has begot an artificial kind of paſſion for them: both which follies well-diſpoſed perſons muſt, by all means, endeavour to keep clear of. For indeed *the love of riches is the root of all evil**: though riches themſelves may be be made inſtrumental in promoting every thing that is good.

THE improvement of trade and commerce

* 1 Tim vi. 10

has made another change, juſt hinted at, and I think a very happy one, in the ſtate of the world, as it has enlarged the middle rank of people: many of which are, in good meaſure, free from the vices of the higheſt and the loweſt part of mankind. Now theſe perſons muſt remember, that whether, in common language, they do, or do not, paſs under the denomination of rich, yet they really are ſo, with regard to the indigent and neceſſitous: and that conſidering the great numbers which make up this middle rank among us, and how much they mix with the poor, they are able to contribute very largely to their relief, and have in all reſpects a very great influence over them.

You have heard now the origin and progreſs of what this great city ſo much abounds with, riches; as far as I had occaſion to ſpeak of theſe things. For this brief account of them has been laid before you for the ſake of the good admonitions it afforded. Nor will the admonitions be thought foreign to the charities, which we are endeavouring to promote. For theſe muſt neceſſarily be leſs, and the occaſions for them greater, in proportion as in-

duſtry ſhould abate, or luxury increaſe. And the temper of covetouſneſs is, we all know, directly contrary to that of charity, and eats out the very heart of it. Then, laſtly, there are good ſort of people who really want to be told, that they are included in the admonitions given to the rich, though they do ſee others richer than themſelves.

The ranks of rich and poor being thus formed, they *meet together;* they continue to make up one ſociety. The mutual want which they ſtill have of each other, ſtill unites them inſeparably. But they meet upon a foot of great inequality. For, as Solomon expreſſes it in brief, and with much force, *the rich ruleth over the poor**. And this their general intercourſe, with the ſuperiority on one hand, and dependance on the other, are in no ſort accidental, but ariſe neceſſarily from a ſettled providential diſpoſition of things, for their common good. Here then is a real ſtanding relation between the rich and the poor. And the former muſt take care to perform the duties belonging to their part of it, for theſe chiefly

* Prov. xxii. 7.

the preſent occaſion leads me to ſpeak to, from regard to him, who placed them in that relation to the poor, from whence thoſe duties ariſe, and *who is the maker of them all.*

WHAT theſe duties are, will eaſily be ſeen, and the obligations to them ſtrongly enforced, by a little further reflection upon both theſe ranks, and the natural ſituation which they are in with reſpect to each other.

THE lower rank of mankind go on, for the moſt part, in ſome tract of living, into which they got by direction or example; and to this their underſtanding and diſcourſe, as well as labour, are greatly confined. Their opinions of perſons and things they take upon truſt. Their behaviour has very little in it original or of home-growth; very little which may not be traced up to the influence of others, and leſs which is not capable of being changed by ſuch influence. Then as God has made plentiful proviſſion for all his creatures, the wants of all, even of the pooreſt, might be ſupplied, ſo far as it is fit they ſhould, by a proper diſtribution of it. This being the condition of the lower part of mankind, conſider now what

influence, as well as power, their ſuperiors muſt, from the nature of the caſe, have over them. For they can inſtill inſtruction, and recommend it in a peculiar manner by their example, and enforce it ſtill farther with favour and diſcouragement of various kinds. And experience ſhews, that they do direct and change the courſe of the world as they pleaſe. Not only the civil welfare, but the morals and religion of their fellow-creatures, greatly depend upon them; much more indeed than they would, if the common people were not greatly wanting to their duty. All this is evidently true of ſuperiors in general; ſuperiors in riches, authority, and underſtanding, taken together. And need I ſay, how much of this whole ſuperiority goes along with riches? It is no ſmall part of it, which ariſes out of riches themſelves. In all governments, particularly in our own, a good ſhare of civil authority accompanies them. Superior natural underſtanding may, or may not: but when it does not, yet riches afford great opportunities for improvement, and may command information; which things

together are equivalent to natural ſuperiority of underſtanding.

But I am ſure you will not think, I have been reminding you of theſe advantages of riches in order to beget in you that complacency and truſt in them, which you find the ſcripture every where warning you againſt. No: the importance of riches, this their power and influence, affords the moſt ſerious admonition in the world to thoſe who are poſſeſſed of them. For it ſhews, how very blameable even their careleſſneſs in the uſe of that power and influence muſt be: ſince it muſt be blameable in a degree proportionate to the importance of what they are thus careleſs about.

But it is not only true, that the rich have the power of doing a great deal of good, and muſt be highly blameable for neglecting to do it: but it is moreover true, that this power is given them by way of truſt, in order to their keeping down that vice and miſery, with which the lower people would be quite over-run. For without inſtruction and good influence, they, of courſe, grow rude and vicious, and

reduce themſelves to the utmoſt diſtreſſes; often to very terrible ones without deſerving much blame. And to theſe muſt be added their unavoidable diſtreſſes, which yet admit of relief. This their caſe plainly requires, that ſome natural proviſion ſhould be made for it: as the caſe of children does, who, if left to their own ways, would almoſt infallibly ruin themſelves. Accordingly providence has made proviſion for this caſe of the poor: not only by forming their minds peculiarly apt to be influenced by their ſuperiors, and giving thoſe ſuperiors abilities to direct and relieve them; but alſo by putting the latter under the care and protection of the former: for this is plainly done, by means of that intercourſe of various kinds between them, which, in the natural courſe of things, is unavoidably neceſſary. In the primitive ages of the world, the manner in which *the rich and the poor met together*, was in families. Rich men had the poor for their ſervants: not only a few for the offices about their perſons, and for the care of what we now call domeſtic affairs; but great numbers alſo for the keeping of their cattle, the tillage of

their fields, for working up their wool into veſtments of neceſſary uſe, as well as ornament, and for preparing them thoſe many things at home, which now paſs through a multitude of unknown poor hands ſucceſſively, and are by them prepared, at a diſtance for the uſe of the rich. The inſtruction of theſe large families, and the overſight of their morals and religion, plainly belonged to the heads of them. And that obvious humanity, which every one feels, muſt have induced them to be kind to all whom they found under their roof, in ſickneſs and old-age. In this ſtate of the world, the relation between the rich and the poor could not but be univerſally ſeen and acknowleged. Now indeed it is leſs in ſight, by means of artificial methods of carrying on buſineſs, which yet are not blameable. But the relation ſtill ſubſiſts, and the obligations ariſing out of it; and cannot but remain the ſame, whilſt the rich have the ſame want of the poor, and make the ſame uſe of them, though not ſo immediately under their eye; and whilſt the inſtruction, and manners, and good or bad ſtate of the poor, really depend in ſo great a degree upon the rich, as

all theſe things evidently do; partly in their capacity of magiſtrates, but very much alſo in their private capacity. In ſhort, he who has diſtributed men into theſe different ranks, and at the ſame time united them into one ſociety, in ſuch ſort as men are united, has, by this conſtitution of things, formally put the poor under the ſuperintendency and patronage of the rich. The rich then are charged, by natural providence, as much as by revealed appointment, with the care of the poor: not to maintain them idle; which, were it poſſible they could be ſo maintained, would produce greater miſchiefs than thoſe which charity is to prevent; but to take care, that they maintain themſelves by their labour, or in caſe they cannot, then to relieve them; to reſtrain their vices, and form their minds to virtue and religion. This is a truſt, yet it is not a burden, but a privilege, annexed to riches. And if every one diſcharged his ſhare of the truſt faithfully, whatever be his ſhare of it, the world would be quite another place from what it is. But that cannot be, till covetouſneſs, debauchery, and every vice be unknown among the

rich. Then, and not before, will the manners of the poor be, in all reſpects. what they ought to be, and their diſtreſſes find the full relief, which they ought to find. And, as far as things of this ſort can be calculated, in proportion to the right behaviour of perſons whom God has placed in the former of theſe ranks, will be the right behaviour and good condition of thoſe who are caſt into the latter. Every one of ability then is to be perſuaded to do ſomewhat towards this, keeping up a ſenſe of virtue and religion among the poor, and relieving their wants; each as much as he can be perſuaded to. Since the generality will not part with their vices, it were greatly to be wiſhed, they would bethink themſelves, and do what good they are able, ſo far only as it is conſiſtent with them. A vicious rich man cannot paſs through life without doing an incredible deal of miſchief, were it only by his example and influence; beſides neglecting the moſt important obligations, which ariſe from his ſuperior fortune. Yet ſtill, the fewer of them he neglects, and the leſs miſchief he does, the leſs ſhare of the vices and miſeries of his

inferiors, will lie at his door: the leſs will be his guilt and puniſhment. But conſcientious perſons of this rank muſt revolve again and again in their minds, how great the truſt is, which God has annexed to it. They muſt each of them conſider impartially, what is his own particular ſhare of that truſt; which is determined by his ſituation, character, and fortune together: and then ſet himſelf to be as uſeful as he can, in thoſe particular ways, which he finds thus marked out to him. This is exactly the precept of St. Peter*; *As every man hath received the gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to another, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God.* And as rich men, by a right direction of their greater capacity, may intitle themſelves to a greater reward; ſo by a wrong direction of it, or even by great negligence, they may become †*partakers of other men's ſins*, and chargeable with other men's miſeries. For if there be at all any meaſures of proportion, any ſort of regularity and order in the adminiſtration of things, it is ſelf-evident, that ‡ *un-*

* 1 Pet. iv. 10. † 1 Tim. v. 22. ‡ Luke xii. 48.

to whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall much be required: and to whom much is committed, of him ſhall more be demanded.

But ſtill it is to be remembered, that every man's behaviour is his own concern, for every one muſt give account of his own works; and that the lower people are very greatly to blame in yielding to any ill influence, particularly following the ill example of their ſuperiors; tho' theſe are more to blame in ſetting them ſuch an example. For, as our Lord declares, in the words immediately proceding thoſe juſt mentioned, * *that ſervant which knew not his Lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with few ſtripes.* Vice is itſelf of ill-deſert, and therefor ſhall be puniſhed in all; though its ill-deſert is greater or leſs, and ſo ſhall be its puniſhment, in proportion to men's knowlege of God and religion: but it is in the moſt literal ſenſe true, *that he who knew not his Lord's*

* Luke xii. 47, 48.

will, and committed things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten, though *with few ſtripes*. For it being the diſcernment, that ſuch and ſuch actions are evil, which renders them vicious in him who does them, ignorance of other things, though it may leſſen, yet it cannot remit the puniſhment of ſuch actions in a juſt adminiſtration, becauſe it cannot deſtroy the guilt of them: much leſs can corrupt deference and regard to the examples of ſuperiors in matters of plain duty and ſin, have this effect. Indeed the loweſt people know very well, that ſuch ill example affords no reaſon why they ſhould do ill; but they hope it will be an excuſe for them, and thus deceive themſelves to their ruin; which is a forcible reaſon why their ſuperiors ſhould not lay this ſnare in their way.

All this approves itſelf to our natural underſtanding; though it is by means of chriſtianity chiefly, that it is thus enforced upon our conſciences. And chriſtianity, as it is more than a diſpenſation of goodneſs, in the general notion of goodneſs, even a diſpenſation of forgiveneſs, of mercy and favour on God's part,

does in a peculiar manner heighten our obligations to charity among ourſelves. *In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us,*— that *he ſent his ſon to be the propitiation for our ſins. Beloved, if God ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another* *. With what unanſwerable force is that queſtion of our Lord to be applied to every branch of this duty, *Shouldſt, not thou alſo have compaſſion on thy fellow-ſervant, even as I had pity on thee?* † And can there be a ſtronger inducement to endeavour the reformation of the world, and bringing it to a ſenſe of virtue and religion, than the aſſurance given us, *that he which converteth a ſinner from the error of his way*, and, in like manner, he alſo who preventeth a perſon's being corrupted, by taking care of his education, *ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and hide a multitude of ſins?* ‡

THESE things lead us to the following obſervations on the ſeveral charities, which are the occaſion of theſe annual ſolemnities.

1. WHAT we have to beſtow in charity be-

* 1 John iv. 9, 10, 11. † Matth. xviii. 33.
‡ James v. 20.

ing a truſt, we cannot diſcharge it faithfully, without taking ſome care to ſatisfy ourſelves in ſome degree, that we beſtow it upon the proper objects of charity. One hears perſons complaining, that it is difficult to diſtinguiſh, who are ſuch; yet often ſeeming to forget, that this is a reaſon for uſing their beſt endeavours to do it. And others make a cuſtom of giving to idle vagabonds: a kind of charity, very improperly ſo called, which one really wonders people can allow themſelves in; merely to be relieved from importunity, or at beſt to gratify a falſe good-nature. For they cannot but know, that it is, at leaſt, very doubtful, whether what they thus give, will not immediately be ſpent in riot and debauchery. Or ſuppoſe it be not, yet ſtill they know, they do a great deal of certain miſchief, by encouraging this ſhameful trade of begging in the ſtreets, and all the diſorders which accompany it. But the charities towards which I now aſk your aſſiſtance, as they are always open; ſo every one may contribute to them with full aſſurance, that he beſtows upon proper objects, and in general that he does vaſtly

more good than by equal ſums given ſeparately to particular perſons. For that theſe charities really have theſe advantages, has been fully made out, by ſome who have gone before me in the duty I am diſcharging, and by the reports annually publiſhed at this time.

Here the report annexed was read.

Let us thank God for theſe charities, in behalf of the poor; and alſo on our own behalf, as they give us ſuch clear opportunities of doing good. Indeed without them vice and miſery, of which there is ſtill ſo much, would abound ſo much more in this populous city, as to render it ſcarce an habitable place.

2. Amongst the peculiar advantages of public charities above private ones, is alſo to be mentioned, that they are examples of great influence. They ſerve for perpetual memorials of what I have been obſerving, of the relation which ſubſiſts between the rich and the poor, and the duties which ariſe out of it. They are ſtanding admonitions to all within ſight or hearing of them, to *go and do like-*

wiſe *. Educating poor children in virtue and religion, relieving the ſick, and correcting offenders in order to their amendment, are, in themſelves, ſome of the very beſt of good works. Theſe charities would indeed be the glory of your city, though their influence were confined to it. But important as they are in themſelves, their importance ſtill increaſes, by their being examples to the reſt of the nation; which, in proceſs of time, of courſe, copies after the metropolis. It has indeed already imitated every one of theſe charities: for of late, the moſt difficult and expenſive of them, hoſpitals for the ſick and wounded, have been eſtabliſhed; ſome within your ſight, others in remote parts of the kingdom. You will give me leave to mention particularly That † in its

* Luke x. 37.

† As it is of very particular benefit to thoſe who ought always to be looked upon with particular favour by us, I mean our ſeamen; ſo likewiſe it is of very extenſive benefit to the large tracts of country, Weſt and North of it. Then the medicinal waters near the city, render it a ſtill more proper ſituation for an infirmary. And ſo likewiſe does its neighbourhood to the Bath-

ſecond trading city; which is conducted with ſuch diſintereſted fidelity and prudence, as I dare venture to compare with yours. Again, there are particular perſons very blameably unactive and careleſs, yet not without good diſpoſitions, who, by theſe charities, are reminded of their duty, *provoked to love and to good works**. And let me add, though one is ſorry any ſhould want ſo ſlight a reaſon for contributing to the moſt excellent deſigns, yet if any are ſuppoſed to do ſo merely of courſe, becauſe they ſee others do it, ſtill they help to ſupport theſe monuments of charity, which are a continued admonition to the rich, and relief to the poor: and herein all good men

hoſpital. For it may well be ſuppoſed, that ſome poor objects will be ſent thither, in hopes of relief from the Bath-waters, whoſe caſe may afterwards be found to require the aſſiſtance of phyſic or ſurgery: and on the other hand, that ſome may be ſent to our infirmary for help from thoſe arts, whoſe caſe may be found to require the Bath-waters. So that if I am not greatly partial, the Briſtol-infirmary as much deſerves encouragement, as any charitable foundation in the kingdom.

* Heb. x. 24.

rejoice, as St. Paul ſpeaks of himſelf in a like caſe, *yea, and will rejoice*†.

3. As all human ſchemes admit of improvement, all public charities, methinks, ſhould be conſidered as ſtanding open to propoſals for it; that the whole plan of them, in all its parts, may be brought to as great perfection as is poſſible. Now it ſhould ſeem, that employing ſome ſhare of the children's time in eaſy labour, ſuitable to their age, which is done in ſome of our charity-ſchools, might be done in moſt others of them, with very good effect; as it is in all thoſe of a neighbouring kingdom. Then as the only purpoſes of puniſhments, leſs than capital, are to reform the offenders themſelves, and warn the innocent by their example, every thing which ſhould contribute to make this kind of puniſhments anſwer theſe purpoſes better than it does, would be a great improvement. And whether it be not a thing practicable, and what would contribute ſomewhat towards it, to exclude utterly all ſorts of revelmirth from places where offenders are confin-

† Phil. 1. 18.

ed, to ſeparate the young from the old, and force them both, in ſolitude, with labour and low diet, to make the experiment, how far their natural ſtrength of mind can ſupport them under guilt and ſhame and poverty; this may deſerve conſideration. Then again, ſome religious inſtruction, particularly adapted to their condition, would as properly accompany thoſe puniſhments which are intended to reform, as it does capital ones. God forbid that I ſhould be underſtood to diſcourage the proviſion which is made for it in this latter caſe: I heartily wiſh it were better than it is; eſpecially ſince it may well be ſuppoſed, as the ſtate of religion is at preſent among us, that ſome condemned malefactors may have never had the doctrine of the goſpel enforced upon their conſciences. But ſince it muſt be acknowleged of greater conſequence, in a religious, as well as civil reſpect, how perſons live, than how they die; it cannot but be even more incumbent on us, to endeavour, in all ways, to reclaim thoſe offenders, who are to return again into the world, than thoſe who are to be removed out of it: and the only effectual means of reclaim-

ing them, is to inſtil into them a principle of religion. If perſons of authority and influence would take things of this and a like kind under their conſideration, they might perhaps ſtill improve thoſe charities; which are already, I truly believe, under a better management than any other of ſo large a compaſs in the world. But,

4. With regard to the two particular branches of them laſt mentioned, I would obſerve, that our laws and whole conſtitution, civil and eccleſiaſtical, go more upon ſuppoſition of an equality amongſt mankind, than the conſtitution and laws of other countries. Now this plainly requires, that more particular regard ſhould be had to the education of the lower people here, than in places where they are born ſlaves of power, and to be made ſlaves of ſuperſtition. It is, I ſuppoſe, acknowleged, that they have greater liberty here, than they have any where elſe in the world. But unleſs care be taken for giving them ſome inward principle, to prevent their abuſing this greater liberty which is their birth-right, can we expect it will prove

a bleſſing to them? or will they not in all probability become more diſſolute, or more wild and extravagant, whatever wrong turn they happen to take, than people of the ſame rank in other countries?

5. Let me again remind you of the additional reaſon, which perſons of fortune have to take particular care of their whole behaviour, that it be in all reſpects good and exemplary, upon account of the influence which it will have upon the manners of their inferiors. And pray obſerve how ſtrictly this is connected with the occaſion of our preſent meeting; how much your good behaviour in private life will contribute to promote the good deſign of all theſe charities: and how much the contrary would tend to defeat it, and even to produce the evils which they are intended to prevent or to remedy. Whatever care be taken in the education of theſe poor children at ſchool, there is always danger of their being corrupted, when they come from it. And the danger is greater, in proportion to the greater wickedneſs of the age they are to paſs through. But if, upon their coming

abroad into the world, they find the principles of virtue and religion recommended by the example of their ſuperiors, and vice and irreligion really diſcountenanced, this will confirm them in the good principles in which they have been brought up, and give the beſt ground to hope, they will never depart from them. And the like is to be ſaid of offenders, who may have had the ſenſe of virtue and religion wrought in them under the diſcipline of labour and confinement. Again; diſſolute and debauched perſons of fortune greatly increaſe the general corruption of manners; and this is what increaſes want and miſery of all kinds. So that they may contribute largely to any or all of theſe charities, and yet undo but a very ſmall part of the miſchief which they do, by their example, as well as in other ways. But ſtill the miſchief which they do, ſuppoſe by their example, is an additional reaſon why they ſhould contribute to them; even in juſtice to particular perſons, in whoſe ruin they may have an unknown ſhare of guilt; or however in juſtice to ſociety in general: for which they will deſerve commendation, how blame-

able ſoever they are for the other. And indeed amidſt the dark proſpect before us, from that profligateneſs of manners, and ſcorn of religion, which ſo generally abound, this good ſpirit of charity to the poor diſcovering itſelf in ſo great a degree, upon theſe occaſions, and likewiſe in the late neceſſitous time, even amongſt perſons far from being blameleſs in other reſpects; this cannot but afford hopes, that we are not given over by providence, and alſo that they themſelves will at length conſider, and not go on contributing, by the example of their vices, to the introduction of that diſtreſs, which they ſo commendably relieve, by their liberality.

To conclude, Let our charity towards men be exalted into piety towards God, from the ſerious conſideration. that we are all his creatures; a conſideration which enforces that duty upon our conſciences, as we have any regard to him. This kind of adjuration, and a moſt ſolemn one it is, one often hears profaned by a very unworthy ſort of people, when they aſk relief *for God's ſake*. But ſurely the principle itſelf, which contains in it every thing

great, and juſt, and good, is grievouſly forgotten among us. To relieve the poor *for God's ſake*, is to do it in conformity to the order of nature, and to his will, and his example, who is the Author and Governor of it; and in thankful rememberance, that all we have is from his bounty. It is to do it, in his behalf, and as to him. For *he that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord* *: and our Saviour has declared, that he will take as given to himſelf, what is given in a well-choſen charity †. Laſtly, It is to do it under a ſenſe of the account which will be required of what is committed to our truſt, when *the rich and poor*, who *meet* here upon terms of ſo great inequality, ſhall *meet* hereafter upon a level, before him, who *is the Maker of them all*.

* Prov. xix. 17. † Matth. xxv. 40.

A SERMON

Preached before the

HOUSE of LORDS,

IN THE

Abbey-Church of *Weſtminſter*,

On Friday, Jan. 30, 1740-41.

Being the day appointed to be obſerved as the day of the martyrdom of King CHARLES I.

1 PETER, ii. 16.

And not uſing your liberty for a cloke of maliciouſneſs, but as the ſervants of God.

AN hiſtory, ſo full of important and intereſting events as that which this day recalls annually to our thoughts, cannot but afford them very different ſubjects for their moſt

ſerious and uſeful employment. But there ſeems none which it more naturally leads us to conſider than that of hypocriſy, as it ſets before us ſo many examples of it; or which will yield us more practical inſtruction, as theſe examples ſo forcibly admoniſh us, not only to be upon our guard againſt the pernicious effects of this vice in others, but alſo to watch over our own hearts, againſt every thing of the like kind in ourſelves: for hypocriſy, in the moral and religious conſideration of things, is of much larger extent than every one may imagine.

In common language, which is formed upon the common intercourſes amongſt men, hypocriſy ſignifies little more than their pretending what they really do not mean, in order to delude one another. But in ſcripture, which treats chiefly of our behaviour towards God and our own conſciences, it ſignifies not only the endeavour to delude our fellow-creatures, but likewiſe inſincerity towards him, and towards ourſelves. And therefor, according to the whole analogy of ſcripture language, *to*

uſe liberty as a cloke of maliciouſneſs *, muſt be underſtood to mean, not only endeavouring

* The hypocriſy laid to the charge of the Phariſees, and Sadducees, in Matth, xvi. at the beginning, and in Luke xii. 54, is determinately this, that their vicious paſſions blinded them ſo as to prevent their diſcerning the evidence of our Saviour's miſſion; though no more underſtanding was neceſſary to diſcern it, than what they had, and made uſe of in common matters. Here they are called hypocrites merely upon account of their inſincerity towards God and their own conſciences, and not at all upon account of any inſincerity towards men. This laſt indeed is included in that general hypocriſy, which, throughout the goſpels, is repreſented as their diſtinguiſhed character; but the former is as much included. For they were not men, who, without any belief at all of religion, put on the appearance of it only in order to deceive the world: on the contrary they believed their religion, and were zealous in it. But their religion, which they believed, and were zealous in, was in its nature hypocritical: for it was the form, not the reality; it allowed them in immoral practices: and indeed was itſelf in ſome reſpects immoral, as they indulged their pride, and uncharitableneſs under the notion of zeal for it. See Jer. ix. 6. Pſal. lxxviii. 36. Job. iii. 19. and Matth. xv. 7—14. and xxiii. 13, 16, 19, 24, 26. where *hypocrite* and *blind*

to impoſe upon others, by indulging wayward paſſions, or carrying on indirect deſigns, under

are uſed promiſcuouſly. Again, the ſcripture ſpeaks of the *deceitfulneſs of ſin*; and its deceiving thoſe who are guilty of it: Heb. iii. 13. Eph. iv. 22. Rom. vii. 11. of men's acting as if they could *deceive and mock God:* Iſ. xxix. 15. Acts v. 3. Gal. vi 7. of their *blinding their own eyes:* Matth. xiii. 15. Acts xxviii. 27. and *deceiving themſelves*; which is quite a different thing from being deceived. 1 Cor. iii. 18. 1 John. i. 8. Gal. vi. 3. Jam. i. 22, 26. Many more coincident paſſages might be mentioned: but I will add only one. In 2 Theſſ. ii. it is foretold, that by means of ſome *force*, ſome *energy of deluſion*, men ſhould believe *the lie* which is there treated of: this *force of deluſion* is not any thing without them, but ſomewhat within them, which it is expreſsly ſaid they ſhould bring upon themſelves, by *not receiving the law of the truth, but having pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs*. Anſwering to all this is that very remarkable paſſage of our Lord, Matth. vi. 22, 23. Luke xi. 34, 35. and that admonition repeated fourteen times in the New-Teſtament, *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. And the ground of this whole manner of conſidering things; for it is not to be ſpoken of as only a peculiar kind of phraſeology, but is a moſt accurate and ſtrictly juſt manner of conſidering characters and moral conduct; the ground of it, I ſay, is that when perſons will not be influenced by ſuch evidence in religion as they act upon

pretences of it; but alſo excuſing and palliating ſuch things to ourſelves; ſerving ourſelves of ſuch pretences to quiet our own minds in any thing which is wrong.

LIBERTY in the writings of the New-Teſtament, for the moſt part, ſignifies, being delivered from the bondage of the ceremonial law; or of ſin and the devil, which St. Paul calls *the glorious liberty of the children of God**. This laſt is a progreſſive ſtate: and the perfection of it, whether attainable in this world or not, conſiſts in that *perfect love*†, which St.

in the daily courſe of life, or when their notions of religion (and I might add of virtue) are in any ſort reconcileable with what is vicious, it is ſome faulty negligence or prejudice, which thus deludes them; in very different ways, perhaps, and very different degrees. But when any one is thus deluded through his own fault, in whatever way or degree it is, he deludes himſelf. And this is as properly hypocriſy towards himſelf, as deluding the world is hypocriſy towards the world: and he who is guilty of it, acts as if he could deceive and mock God; and therefor is an hypocrite towards him, in as ſtrict and literal a ſenſe as the nature of the ſubject will admit.

* Rom. viii. 21. † 1 John iv. 18.

John ſpeaks of; and which, as it implies an entire coincidence of our wills with the will of God, muſt be a ſtate of the moſt abſolute freedom, in the moſt literal and proper ſenſe. But whatever St. Peter diſtinctly meant by this word, *liberty*, the text gives occaſion to conſider any kind of it, which is liable to the abuſe he here warns us againſt. However, it appears that he meant to comprehend that liberty, were it more or leſs, which they to whom he was writing enjoyed under civil government: for of civil government he is ſpeaking juſt before and afterwards: *Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake: whether it be to the king, as ſupreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are ſent by him**. *For ſo is the will of God, that with well-doing*, of which dutiful behaviour towards authority is a very material inſtance, *ye may put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men: as free*, perhaps in diſtinction from the ſervile ſtate, of which he ſpeaks afterwards †, *and not uſing your liberty for a cloke of maliciouſneſs*, of any thing wrong, for ſo the word ſignifies; and therefor comprehends petulance, affectation of po-

* John v. 13. † v. 18.

pularity, with any other like frivolous turn of mind, as well as the more hateful and dangerous paſſions, ſuch as malice, or ambition; for all of which *liberty* may likewiſe be *uſed as a cloke*. The apoſtle adds, *but as the ſervants of God: as free—but as his ſervants*, who requires dutiful ſubmiſſion to *every ordinance of man*, to magiſtracy; and to whom we are accountable for our manner of uſing the liberty we enjoy under it; as well as for all other parts of our behaviour. *Not uſing your liberty as a cloke of maliciouſneſs, but as the ſervants of God.*

HERE are three things offered to our conſideration:

Firſt, A general ſuppoſition, that what is wrong cannot be avowed in its proper colours, but ſtands in need of ſome *cloke* to be thrown over it: *Secondly*, A particular one, that there is danger, ſome ſingular danger, of liberty's being made uſe of for this purpoſe: *Laſtly*, An admonition not to make this ill uſe of our liberty, *but* to uſe it *as the ſervants of God.*

I. HERE is a general ſuppoſition, that what

is wrong cannot be avowed in its proper colours, but ſtands in need of ſome cloke to be thrown over it. God has conſtituted our nature, and the nature of ſociety after ſuch a manner, that, generally ſpeaking, men cannot encourage or ſupport themſelves in wickedneſs upon the foot of their being no difference between right and wrong, or by a direct avowal of wrong; but by diſguiſing it, and endeavouring to ſpread over it ſome colours of right. And they do this in every capacity and every reſpect, in which there is a right or a wrong. They do it, not only as ſocial creatures under civil government, but alſo as moral agents under the government of God; in one caſe to make a proper figure in the world, and delude their fellow-creatures; in the other to keep peace within themſelves, and delude their own conſciences. And the deluſion in both caſes, being voluntary, is, in ſcripture, called by one name, and ſpoken againſt in the ſame manner: though doubtleſs they are much more explicit with themſelves, and more diſtinctly conſcious of what they are about, in one caſe than in the other.

THE fundamental laws of all governments are virtuous ones, prohibiting treachery, injuſtice, cruelty: and the law of reputation enforces thoſe civil laws, by rendering theſe vices every where infamous, and the contrary virtues honourable and of good report. Thus far the conſtitution of ſociety is viſibly moral: and hence it is, that men cannot live in it without taking care to cover thoſe vices when they have them, and make ſome profeſſion of the oppoſite virtues, fidelity, juſtice, kind regard to others, when they have them not: but eſpecially is this neceſſary in order to diſguiſe and colour over indirect purpoſes, which require the concurrence of ſeveral perſons.

Now all falſe pretences of this kind are to be called hypocritical, as being contrary to ſimplicity; though not always deſigned, properly ſpeaking, to beget a falſe belief. For it is to be obſerved, that they are often made without any formal intention to have them believed, or to have it thought that there is any reality under theſe pretences. Many examples occur of verbal profeſſions of fidelity, juſtice, public regards, in caſes where there could be

no imagination of their being believed. And what other account can be given of theſe merely verbal profeſſions, but that they were thought the proper language for the public ear; and made in buſineſs, for the very ſame kind of reaſons as civility is kept up in converſation?

THESE falſe profeſſions of virtue, which men have, in all ages, found it neceſſary to make their apptarance with abroad, muſt have been originally taken up in order to deceive in the proper ſenſe: then they became habitual, and often intended merely by way of form: yet often ſtill, to ſerve their original purpoſe of deceiving.

THERE is doubtleſs amongſt mankind, a great deal of this hypocriſy towards each other: but not ſo much as may ſometimes be ſuppoſed. For part which has, at firſt ſight, this appearance, is in reality that other hypocriſy before-mentioned; that ſelf-deceit, of which the ſcripture ſo remarkably takes notice. There are indeed perſons, who live *without God in the world**: and ſome appear ſo har-

* Epheſ. ii. 12.

dened as to keep no meaſures with themſelves. But as very ill men may have a real and ſtrong ſenſe of virtue and religion, in proportion as this is the caſe with any, they cannot be eaſy within themſelves but by deluding their conſciences. And though they ſhould, in great meaſure, get over their religion, yet this will not do. For as long as they carry about with them any ſuch ſenſe of things, as makes them condemn what is wrong in others, they could not but condemn the ſame in themſelves, and diſlike and be diſguſted with their own character and conduct, if they would conſider them diſtinctly, and in a full light. But this ſometimes they careleſsly neglect to do, and ſometimes carefully avoid doing. And as *the integrity of the upright guides him* *, guides even a man's judgment; ſo wickedneſs may diſtort it to ſuch a degree, as that he may *call evil good, and good evil; put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs* †; and *think wickedly, that God is ſuch an one as himſelf* ‡. Even the bet-

* Prov. xi. 3. † Iſ. v. 20. ‡ Pſal. l. 21.

ter ſort of men are, in ſome degree, liable to diſguiſe and palliate their failings to themſelves: but perhaps there are few men who go on calmly in a courſe of very bad things, without ſomewhat of the kind now deſcribed in a very high degree. They try appearances upon themſelves as well as upon the world, and with at leaſt as much ſucceſs; and chuſe to manage ſo as to make their own minds eaſy with their faults, which can ſcarce be without management, rather than to mend them.

But whether from men's deluding themſelves, or from their intending to delude the world, it is evident ſcarce any thing wrong in public has ever been accompliſhed, or even attempted, but under falſe colours: either by pretending one thing, which was right, to be deſigned, when it was really another thing, which was wrong; or if that which was wrong was avowed, by endeavouring to give it ſome appearance of right. For tyranny, and faction ſo friendly to it, and which is indeed tyranny out of power, and unjuſt wars, and perſecution, by which the earth hath been laid waſte; all this has all along been carried on

with pretences of truth, right, general good. So it is, men cannot find in their heart to join in ſuch things without ſuch honeſt words to be the bond of the union, though they know among themſelves, that they are only words, and often though they know, that every body elſe knows it too.

THESE obſervations might be exemplified by numerous inſtances in the hiſtory which led to them: and without them it is impoſſible to underſtand in any ſort the general character of the chief actors in it, who were engaged in the black deſign of ſubverting the conſtitution of their country. This they completed with the moſt enormous act of mere power, in defiance of all laws of God and man, and in expreſs contradiction to the real deſign and public votes of that aſſembly, whoſe commiſſion, they profeſſed, was their only warrant for any thing they did throughout the whole rebellion. Yet with unheard-of hypocriſy towards men, towards God and their own conſciences, for, without ſuch a complication of it, their conduct is inexplicable; even this action, which ſo little admitted of any cloke, was, we

know, contrived and carried into execution, under pretences of authority, religion, liberty, and by profaning the forms of juſtice in an arraignment and trial, like to what is uſed in regular legal procedures. No age indeed can ſhew an example of hypocriſy parallel to this. But the hiſtory of all ages, and all countries, will ſhew, what has been really going forward over the face of the earth, to be very different from what has been always pretended; and that virtue has been every where profeſſed much more than it has been any where practiſed: nor could ſociety, from the very nature of its conſtitution, ſubſiſt without ſome general public profeſſion of it. Thus the face, and appearance which the world has in all times put on, for the eaſe and ornament of life, and in purſuit of further ends, is the juſteſt ſatire upon what has in all times been carrying on under it: and ill men are deſtined, by the condition of their being as ſocial creatures, always to bear about with them, and, in different degrees, to profeſs that law of virtue, by which they ſhall finally be judged and condemned.

II. As fair pretences, of one ſort or other, have thus always been made uſe of by mankind to colour over indirect and wrong deſigns from the world, and to palliate and excuſe them to their own minds; liberty, in common with all other good things, is liable to be made this uſe of, and is alſo liable to it in a way more peculiar to itſelf: which was the ſecond thing to be conſidered.

In the hiſtory which this day refers us to, we find our conſtitution, in church and ſtate, deſtroyed under pretences, not only of religion, but of ſecuring liberty, and carrying it to a greater height. The deſtruction of the former was with zeal of ſuch a kind, as would not have been warrantable, though it had been employed in the deſtruction of heatheniſm. And the confuſions, the perſecuting ſpirit, and incredible fanaticiſm, which grew up upon its ruins, cannot but teach ſober-minded men to reverence ſo mild and reaſonable an eſtabliſhment, now it is reſtored; for the preſervation of chriſtianity, and keeping up a ſenſe of it amongſt us, and for the inſtruction and guide of the ignorant; nay were it only for guard-

ing religion from ſuch extravagancies; eſpecially as theſe important purpoſes are ſerved by it without bearing hard in the leaſt upon any.

And the concurrent courſe of things, which brought on the ruin of our civil conſtitution, and what followed upon it, are no leſs inſtructive. The oppoſition, by legal and parliamentary methods, to prerogatives unknown to the conſtitution, was doubtleſs formed upon the juſteſt fears in behalf of it. But new diſtruſts aroſe: new cauſes were given for them: theſe were moſt unreaſonably aggravated. The better part gradually gave way to the more violent; and the better part themſelves ſeem to have inſiſted upon impracticable ſecurities againſt that one danger to liberty, of which they had too great cauſe to be apprehenſive; and wonderfully overlooked all other dangers to it, which yet were, and ever will be, many and great. Thus they joined in the current meaſures, till they were utterly unable to ſtop the miſchiefs to which, with too much diſtruſt on one ſide, and too little on the other, they had contributed. Never was a more remarkable example of the wiſe man's obſervation,

that *the beginning of ſtrife is as when one letteth out water* *. For this oppoſition, thus begun, ſurely without intent of proceeding to violence; yet as it went on, like an overflowing ſtream in its progreſs, it collected all ſort of impurities, and grew more outrageous as it grew more corrupted; till at length it bore down every thing good before it. This naturally brought on arbitrary power in one ſhape, which was odious to every body, and which could not be accommodated to the forms of our conſtitution; and put us in the utmoſt danger of having it entailed upon us under another, which might. For at the king's return, ſuch was the juſt indignation of the public at what it had ſeen, and fear of feeling again what it had felt, from the popular ſide; ſuch the depreſſion and compliance, not only of the more guilty, but alſo of thoſe, who with better meaning had gone on with them; and a great deal too far many of this character had gone; and ſuch the undiſtinguiſhing diſtruſt the people had of them all, that the chief ſecurity of our liberties ſeems to have been, their not being attempted at that time.

* Prov. xvii. 14.

But though perſons contributed to all this miſchief and danger with different degrees of guilt, none could contribute to them with innocence, who at all knew what they were about. Indeed the deſtruction of a free conſtitution of government, though men ſee or fancy many defects in it, and whatever they deſign or pretend, ought not to be thought of without horror. For the deſign is in itſelf unjuſt, ſince it is romantic to ſuppoſe it legal: it cannot be proſecuted without the moſt wicked means: nor accompliſhed but with the preſent ruin of liberty, religious as well as civil; for it muſt be the ruin of its preſent ſecurity. Whereas the reſtoration of it muſt depend upon a thouſand future contingencies, the integrity, underſtanding, power of the perſons, into whoſe hands, anarchy and confuſion ſhould throw things: and who they will be, the hiſtory before us may ſurely ſerve to ſhew, no human foreſight can determine; even though ſuch a terrible criſis were to happen in an age, not diſtinguiſhed for the want of principle and public ſpirit, and when nothing particular were to be apprehended from abroad. It

would be partiality to ſay, that no conſtitution of government can poſſibly be imagined more perfect than our own. And ingenuous youth may be warmed with the idea of one, againſt which nothing can be objected. But it is the ſtrongeſt objection againſt attempting to put in practice the moſt perfect theory, that it is impracticable, or too dangerous to be attempted. And whoever will thoroughly conſider, in what degree mankind are really influenced by reaſon, and in what degree by cuſtom, may, I think, be convinced, that the ſtate of human affairs does not even admit of an equivalent, for the miſchief of ſetting things afloat; and the danger of parting with thoſe ſecurities of liberty, which ariſe from regulations of long preſcription and ancient uſage: eſpecially at a time when the directors are ſo very numerous, and the obedient ſo few. Reaſonable men therefor will look upon the general plan of our conſtitution, tranſmitted down by our anceſtors, as ſacred; and content themſelves with calmly doing what their ſtation requires, towards rectifying the particular things which

they think amiſs, and ſupplying the particular things which they think deficient in it, ſo far as is practicable without endangering the whole.

But liberty is in many other dangers from itſelf beſides thoſe which ariſe from formed deſigns of deſtroying it, under hypocritical pretences, or romantic ſchemes of reſtoring it upon a more perfect plain. It is particularly liable to become exceſſive, and to degenerate inſenſibly into licentiouſneſs; in the ſame manner as liberality, for example, is apt to degenerate into extravagance. And as men cloke their extravagance to themſelves under the notion of liberality, and to the world under the name of it, ſo licentiouſneſs paſſes under the name and notion of liberty. Now it is to be obſerved, that there is, in ſome reſpects or other, a very peculiar contrariety between thoſe vices which conſiſt in exceſs, and the virtues of which they are ſaid to be the exceſs, and the reſemblance, and whoſe names they affect to bear; the exceſs of any thing being always to its hurt, and tending to its deſtruction. In this manner licentiouſneſs is, in its very nature, a preſent enfringement upon liberty, and

dangerous to it for the future. Yet it is treated by many perſons with peculiar indulgence under this very notion, as being an exceſs of liberty. And an exceſs of liberty it is to the licentious themſelves: but what is it to thoſe who ſuffer by them, and who do not think, that amends is at all made them by having it left in their power to retaliate ſafely? When by popular inſurrections, or defamatory libels, or in any like way, the needy and the turbulent ſecurely injure quiet people in their fortune or good-name, ſo far quiet people are no more free than if a ſingle tyrant had uſed them thus. A particular man may be licentious without being leſs free; but a community cannot; ſince the licentiouſneſs of one will unavoidably break in upon the liberty of another. Civil liberty, the liberty of a community, is a ſevere and a reſtrained thing; implies in the notion of it, authority, ſettled ſubordinations, ſubjection and obedience; and is altogether as much hurt by too little of this kind as by too much of it. And the love of liberty, when it is indeed the love of liberty, which carries us to withſtand tyranny, will as much carry us to

reverence authority, and ſupport it; for this moſt obvious reaſon, that one is as neceſſary to the very being of liberty, as the other is deſtructive of it. And therefor the love of liberty, which does not produce this effect; the love of liberty which is not a real principle of dutiful behaviour towards authority; is as hypocritical, as the religion which is not productive of a good life. Licentiouſneſs is, in truth, ſuch an exceſs of liberty as is of the ſame nature with tyranny. For what is the difference between them, but that one is lawleſs power exerciſed under pretence of authority, or by perſons inveſted with it; the other lawleſs power exerciſed under pretence of liberty, or without any pretence at all? A people then muſt always be leſs free in proportion as they are more licentious; licentiouſneſs being, not only different from liberty, but directly contrary to it; a direct breach upon it.

It is moreover of a growing nature; and of ſpeedy growth too; and, with the culture which it has amongſt us, needs no great length of time to get to ſuch an height as no legal government will be able to reſtrain, or ſubſiſt

under: which is the condition the hiſtorian deſcribes in ſaying, they could neither bear their vices, nor the remedies of them *. I ſaid legal government: for, in the preſent ſtate of the world, there is no danger of our becoming ſavages. Had licentiouſneſs finiſhed its work, and deſtroyed our conſtitution, power would not be wanting, from one quarter or another, ſufficient to ſubdue us, and keep us in ſubjection. But government, as diſtinguiſhed from mere power, free government, neceſſarily implies reverence in the ſubjects of it, for authority, or power regulated by laws; and an habit of ſubmiſſion to the ſubordinations in civil life, throughout its ſeveral ranks: nor is a people capable of liberty without ſomewhat of this kind. But it muſt be obſerved, and leſs ſurely cannot be obſerved, this reverence and ſubmiſſion will at beſt be very precarious, if it be not founded upon a ſenſe of authority being God's ordinance, and the ſubordinations in life a providential appointment of things. Now let it be conſidered, for ſurely it is not duly

* Nec vitia noſtra, nec remedia pati poſſumus.
Liv. l. i. c. 1.

conſidered, what is really the ſhort amount of thoſe repreſentations, which perſons of ſuperior rank give, and encourage to be given of each other, and which are ſpread over the nation? Is it not ſomewhat, in itſelf, and in its circumſtances, beyond any thing in any other age or country of the world? And what effect muſt the continuance of this extravagant licentiouſneſs in them, not to mention other kinds of it, have upon the people in thoſe reſpects juſt mentioned? Muſt it not neceſſarily tend to wear out of their minds all reverence for authority, and reſpect for ſuperiors of every ſort; and, joined with the irreligious principles we find ſo induſtriouſly propagated, to introduce a total profligateneſs amongſt them; ſince, let them be as bad as they will, it is ſcarce poſſible they can be ſo bad as they are inſtructed they may be, or worſe than they are told their ſuperiors are? And is there no danger that all this, to mention only one ſuppoſeable courſe of it, may raiſe ſomewhat like that levelling ſpirit, upon atheiſtical principles, which in the laſt age, prevailed upon enthuſiaſtic ones? not to ſpeak of the poſſibility, that different

ſorts of people may unite in it, upon theſe contrary principles. And may not this ſpirit, together with a concurrence of ill-humours, and of perſons who hope to find their account in confuſion, ſoon prevail to ſuch a degree, as will require more of the good old principles of loyalty and of religion to withſtand it, than appear to be left amongſt us?

WHAT legal remedies can be provided againſt theſe miſchiefs, or whether any at all, are conſiderations the fartheſt from my thoughts. No government can be free, which is not adminiſtered by general ſtated laws: and theſe cannot comprehend every caſe, which wants to be provided againſt: nor can new ones be made for every particular caſe, as it ariſes: and more particular laws, as well as more general ones, admit of infinite evaſions: and legal government forbids any but legal methods of redreſs; which cannot but be liable to the ſame ſort of imperfections: beſides the additional one of delay; and whilſt redreſs is delayed, however unavoidably, wrong ſubſiſts. Then there are very bad things, which human authority can ſcarce provide againſt at all, but

by methods dangerous to liberty; nor fully, but by ſuch as would be fatal to it. Theſe things ſhew, that liberty, in the very nature of it, abſolutely requires, and even ſuppoſes, that people be able to govern themſelves in thoſe reſpects in which they are free; otherwiſe their wickedneſs will be in proportion to their liberty, and this greateſt of bleſſings will become a curſe.

III. THESE things ſhew likewiſe, that there is but one adequate remedy to the forementioned evils, even that which the apoſtle preſcribes in the laſt words of the text, to conſider ourſelves *as the ſervants of God*, who injoins dutiful ſubmiſſion to civil authority, as his ordinance; and to whom we are accountable for the uſe we make of the liberty which we enjoy under it. Since men cannot live out of ſociety, nor in it without government, government is plainly a divine appointment; and conſequently ſubmiſſion to it, a moſt evident duty of the law of nature. And we all know in how forcible a manner it is put upon our conſciences in ſcripture. Nor can this obligation be

denied formally upon any principles, but ſuch as ſubvert all other obligations. Yet many amongſt us ſeem not to conſider it as an obligation at all. This doubtleſs is, in a great meaſure, owing to diſſoluteneſs and corruption of manners: but I think it is partly owing to their having reduced it to nothing in theory. Whereas this obligation ought to be put upon the ſame foot with all other general ones, which are not abſolute and without exception: and our ſubmiſſion is due in all caſes but thoſe, which we really diſcern to be exceptions to the general rule. And they, who are perpetually diſplaying the exceptions, though they do not indeed contradict the meaning of any particular texts of ſcripture, which ſurely intended to make no alteration in men's civil rights; yet they go againſt the general tenor of ſcripture. For the ſcripture, throughout the whole of it, commands ſubmiſſion; ſuppoſing men apt enough of themſelves to make the exceptions, and not to need being continually reminded of them. Now if we are really under any obligations of duty at all to magiſtrates, ho-

nour and reſpect, in our behaviour towards them, muſt doubtleſs be their due. And they who refuſe to pay them this ſmall and eaſy regard, who *deſpiſe dominion, and ſpeak evil of dignities* *, ſhould ſeriouſly aſk themſelves, what reſtrains them from any other inſtance whatever of undutifulneſs? And if it be principle, why not from this? Indeed free government ſuppoſes, that the conduct of affairs may be enquired into, and ſpoken of with freedom. Yet ſurely this ſhould be done with decency, for the ſake of liberty itſelf; for its honour, and its ſecurity. But be it done as it will, it is a very different thing from libelling, and endeavouring to vilify the perſons of ſuch as are in authority. It will be hard to find an inſtance, in which a ſerious man could calmly ſatisfy himſelf in doing this. It is in no caſe neceſſary, and in every caſe of very pernicious tendency. But the immorality of it increaſes in proportion to the integrity, and ſuperior rank of the perſons thus treated. It is therefore in the higheſt degree immoral, when it

* Jude viii.

extends to the ſupreme authority in the perſon of a prince, from whom our liberties are in no imaginable danger, whatever they may be from ourſelves; and whoſe mild, and ſtrictly legal government could not but make any virtuous people happy.

A free government, which the good providence of God has preſerved to us through innumerable dangers, is an invaluable bleſſing. And our ingratitude to him in abuſing of it, muſt be great in proportion to the greatneſs of the bleſſing, and the providential deliverances by which it has been preſerved to us. Yet the crime of abuſing this bleſſing *, receives further aggravation from hence, that ſuch abuſe always is to the reproach, and tends to the ruin of it. The abuſe of liberty has directly overturned many free governments, as well as our own, on the popular ſide; and has, in various ways, contributed to the ruin of many, which have been overturned on the ſide of authority. Heavy therefor muſt be their guilt, who ſhall be found to have given advantages againſt it, as well as theirs who have taken them.

* See p. 203. etc. etc.

Laſtly, THE conſideration, that we are the ſervants of God, reminds us, that we are accountable to him for our behaviour in thoſe reſpects, in which it is out of the reach of all human authority; and is the ſtrongeſt enforcement of ſincerity, as *all things are naked, and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do* *. Artificial behaviour might perhaps avail much towards quieting our conſciences, and making our part good in the ſhort competitions of this world: but what will it avail us conſidered as under the government of God? Under his government, *there is no darkneſs, nor ſhadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves* †. He has indeed inſtituted civil government over the face of the earth, *for the puniſhment of evil-doers, and for the praiſe*, the apoſtle does not ſay the rewarding, but, *for the praiſe of them that do well* ‡. Yet as the worſt anſwer theſe ends in ſome meaſure, the beſt can do it very imperfectly. Civil government can by no means take cog-

* Heb. iv. 13. † Job xxxiv. 22. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 14.

nizance of every work, which is good or evil: many things are done in ſecret; the authors unknown to it, and often the things themſelves: then it cannot ſo much conſider actions, under the view of their being morally good, or evil, as under the view of their being miſchievous, or beneficial to ſociety: nor can it in any wiſe execute judgment in rewarding what is good, as it can, and ought, and does, in puniſhing what is evil. But *God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil**.

* Eccleſ. xii. 14.

A

SERMON

Preached in the Pariſh Church of

CHRIST-CHURCH, *London;*

On Thurſday, May 9, 1745.

Being the time of the YEARLY MEETING of the CHILDREN educated in the Charity-Schools, in and about the cities of London and Weſtminſter.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

HUMAN creatures, from the conſtitution of their nature and the circumſtances in which they are placed, cannot but acquire habits during their childhood, by the impreſ-

ſions which are given them, and their own cuſtomary actions. And long before they arrive at mature age, theſe habits form a general ſettled character. And the obſervation of the text, that the moſt early habits are uſually the moſt laſting, is likewiſe every one's obſervation. Now whenever children are left to themſelves, and to the guides and companions which they chooſe, or by hazard light upon, we find by experience, that the firſt impreſſions they take, and courſe of action they get into, are very bad; and ſo conſequently muſt be their habits, and character, and future behaviour. Thus if they are not trained up in the way they *ſhould go*, they will certainly be trained up in the way they *ſhould not go*: and, in all probability, will preſerve in it, and become miſerable themſelves, and miſchievous to ſociety: which, in event, is worſe, upon account of both, than if they had been expoſed to periſh in their infancy. On the other hand, the ingenuous docility of children before they have been deceived, their diſtruſt of themſelves, and natural deference to grown people, whom they find here ſettled in a world, where they themſelves

are ſtrangers; and to whom they have recourſe for advice, as readily as for protection; which deference is ſtill greater towards thoſe who are placed over them: theſe things give the juſteſt grounds to expect, that they may receive ſuch impreſſions, and be influenced to ſuch a courſe of behaviour, as will produce laſting good habits; and, together with the dangers beforementioned, are as truly a natural demand upon us to *train them up in the way they ſhould go*, as their bodily wants are a demand to provide them bodily nouriſhment. Brute creatures are appointed to do no more than this laſt for their offspring, nature forming them by inſtincts to the particular manner of life appointed them; from which they never deviate. But this is ſo far from being the caſe of men, that, on the contrary, conſidering communities collectively, every ſucceſſive generation is left, in the ordinary courſe of providence, to be formed by the preceding one; and becomes good or bad, though not without its own merit or demerit, as this truſt is diſcharged or violated, chiefly in the management of youth.

We ought, doubtleſs, to inſtruct and admoniſh grown perſons; to reſtrain them from what is evil, and encourage them in what is good, as we are able: but this care of youth, abſtracted from all conſideration of the parental affection, I ſay, this care of youth, which is the general notion of education, becomes a diſtinct ſubject, and a diſtinct duty, from the particular danger of their ruin, if left to themſelves, and the particular reaſon we have to expect they will do well, if due care be taken of them. And from hence it follows, that children have as much right to ſome proper education, as to have their lives preſerved; and that when this is not given them by their parents, the care of it devolves upon all perſons, it becomes the duty of all, who are capable of contributing to it, and whoſe help is wanted.

These trite, but moſt important things, implied indeed in the text, being thus premiſed as briefly as I could expreſs them, I proceed to conſider diſtinctly the general manner in which the duty of education is there laid before us: which will further ſhew its extent,

and farther obviate the idle objections which have been made againſt it. And all this together will naturally lead us to conſider the occaſion and neceſſity of ſchools for the education of poor children, and in what light the objections againſt them are to be regarded.

SOLOMON might probably intend the text for a particular admonition to educate children in a manner ſuitable to their reſpective ranks, and future employments: but certainly he intended it for a general admonition to educate them in virtue and religion, and good conduct of themſelves in their temporal concerns. And all this together, in which they are to be educated, he calls *the way they ſhould go*, that is, he mentions it not as a matter of ſpeculation but of practice. And conformably to this deſcription of the things in which children are to be educated, he deſcribes education itſelf: for he calls it *training them up;* which is a very different thing from merely teaching them ſome truths neceſſary to be known or believed. It is endeavouring to form ſuch truths

into practical principles in the mind, ſo as to render them of habitual good influence upon the temper and actions, in all the various occurrences of life. And this is not done by bare inſtruction; but by that, together with admoniſhing them frequently as occaſion offers; reſtraining them from what is evil, and exerciſing them in what is good. Thus the precept of the apoſtle concerning this matter is, *to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord**; as it were by way of diſtinction from acquainting them merely with the principles of chriſtianity, as you would with any common theory. Though education were nothing more than informing children of ſome truths of importance to them, relating to religion and common life, yet there would be great reaſon for it, notwithſtanding the frivolous objections concerning the danger of giving them prejudices. But when we conſider, that ſuch information itſelf is really the leaſt part of it; and that it conſiſts in endeavouring to put them into right diſpoſitions of mind,

* Epheſ vi. 4.

and right habits of living, in every relation and every capacity; this conſideration ſhews ſuch objections to be quite abſurd: ſince it ſhews them to be objections againſt doing a a thing of the utmoſt importance at the natural opportunity of our doing it, childhood and youth; and which is indeed, properly ſpeaking, our only one. For when they are grown up to maturity, they are out of our hands, and muſt be left to themſelves. The natural authority on one ſide ceaſes, and the deference on the other. God forbid that it ſhould be impoſſible for men to recollect themſelves, and reform at an advanced age; but it is in no ſort in the power of others to gain upon them; to turn them away from what is wrong, and enforce upon them what is right, at that ſeaſon of their lives, in the manner we might have done in their childhood.

Doubtless religion requires inſtruction, for it is founded in knowlege and belief of ſome truths. And ſo is common prudence in the management of our temporal affairs. Yet neither of them conſiſt in the knowlege or belief even of theſe fundamental truths; but in our

being brought by ſuch knowlege or belief to a correſpondent temper and behaviour. Religion, as it ſtood under the Old Teſtament, is perpetually ſtiled *the fear of God:* under the New, *Faith in Chriſt*. But as that fear of God does not ſignify literally being afraid of him, but having a good heart, and leading a good life, in conſequence of ſuch fear; ſo this faith in Chriſt does not ſignify literally believing in him, in the ſenſe that word is uſed in common language, but becoming his real diſciples, in conſequence of ſuch belief.

Our religion being then thus practical, conſiſting in a frame of mind and courſe of behaviour, ſuitable to the diſpenſation we are under, and which will bring us to our final good; children ought, by education, to be habituated to this courſe of behaviour, and formed into this frame of mind. And it muſt ever be remembered, that if no care be taken to do it, they will grow up in direct contrary behaviour, and be hardened in direct contrary habits. They will more and more corrupt themſelves, and ſpoil their proper nature. They will alienate themſelves farther from God; and not

only neglect, but *trample under foot*, the means which he in his infinite mercy has appointed for our recovery. And upon the whole, the ſame reaſons which ſhew, that they ought to be inſtructed and exerciſed in what will render them uſeful to ſociety, ſecure them from the preſent evils they are in danger of incurring, and procure them that ſatisfaction which lies within the reach of human prudence; ſhew likewiſe, that they ought to be inſtructed and exerciſed in what is ſuitable to the higheſt relations in which we ſtand, and the moſt important capacity in which we can be conſidered; in that temper of mind and courſe of behaviour, which will ſecure them from their chief evil, and bring them to their chief good. Beſides that religion is the principal ſecurity of men's acting a right part in ſociety, and even in reſpect to their own temporal happineſs, all things duly conſidered.

It is true indeed, children may be taught ſuperſtition, under the notion of religion; and it is true alſo, that, under the notion of prudence, they may be educated in great miſtakes as to the nature of real intereſt and good, reſ-

pecting the preſent world. But this is no more a reaſon for not educating them according to the beſt of our judgment, than our knowing how very liable we all are to err in other caſes, is a reaſon why we ſhould not, in thoſe other caſes, act according to the beſt of our judgment.

It being then of the greateſt importance, that children ſhould be thus educated, the providing ſchools to give this education to ſuch of them as would not otherwiſe have it, has the appearance, at leaſt at firſt ſight, of deſerving a place amongſt the very beſt of good works. One would be backward, methinks, in entertaining prejudices againſt it; and very forward, if one had any, to lay them aſide, upon being ſhewn that they were groundleſs. Let us conſider the whole ſtate of the caſe. For though this will lead us ſome little compaſs, yet I chuſe to do it; and the rather, becauſe there are people who ſpeak of charity ſchools as a new invented ſcheme, and therefor to be looked upon with I know not what ſuſpicion. Whereas it will appear that the ſcheme of charity ſchools, even the part of it which is

moſt looked upon in this light, teaching the children letters and accounts, is no otherwiſe new, than as the occaſion for it is ſo.

FORMERLY, not only the education of poor children, but alſo their maintainance, with that of the other poor, were left to voluntary charities. But great changes of different ſorts happening over the nation, and charity becoming more cold, or the poor more numerous, it was found neceſſary to make ſome legal proviſion for them. This might, much more properly than charity ſchools, be called a new ſcheme. For without queſtion, the education of poor children was all along taken care of, by voluntary charities, more or leſs: but obliging us by law to maintain the poor, was new in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Yet, becauſe a change of circumſtances made it neceſſary, its novelty was no reaſon againſt it. Now in that legal proviſion for the maintenance of the poor, poor children muſt doubtleſs have had a part in common with grown people. But this could never be ſufficient for children, becauſe their caſe always requires

more than mere maintenance; it requires that they be educated in ſome proper manner. Wherever there are poor who want to be maintained by charity, there muſt be poor children who, beſides this, want to be educated by charity. And whenever there began to be need of legal proviſion for the maintenance of the poor, there muſt immediately have been need alſo of ſome particular legal proviſion in behalf of poor children for their education; this not being included in what we call their maintenance. And many whoſe parents are able to maintain them, and do ſo, may yet be utterly neglected as to their education. But poſſibly it might not at firſt be attended to, that the caſe of poor children was thus a caſe by itſelf, which required its own particular proviſion. Certainly it would not appear, to the generality, ſo urgent an one as the want of food and raiment. And it might be neceſſary, that a burden ſo entirely new, as that of a poor-tax was at the time I am ſpeaking of, ſhould be as light as poſſible. Thus the legal proviſion for the poor was firſt ſettled; without any particular conſideration of that additional

want in the caſe of children; as it ſtill remains, with ſcarce any alteration in this reſpect. In the mean time, as the poor ſtill increaſed or charity ſtill leſſened, many poor children were left expoſed, not to periſh for want of food, but to grow up in ſociety, and learn every thing that is evil and nothing that is good in it; and when they were grown up, greatly at a loſs in what honeſt way to provide for themſelves, if they could be ſuppoſed inclined to it. And larger numbers, whoſe caſe was not ſo bad as this, yet were very far from having due care taken of their education. And the evil went on increaſing, till it was grown to ſuch a degree, as to be quite out of the compaſs of ſeparate charities to remedy. At length ſome excellent perſons, who were united in a *ſociety* * for carrying on almoſt every good work, took into conſideration the neglected caſe I I have been repreſenting; and firſt of all, as I underſtand it, ſet up charity ſchools; or however promoted them, as far as their abilities and influence could extend. Their deſign was

* SOCIETY for promoting Chriſtian Knowlege.

not in any ſort to remove poor children out of the rank in which they were born, but, keeping them in it, to give them the aſſiſtance which their circumſtances plainly called for; by educating them in the principles of religion, as well as civil life; and likewiſe making ſome ſort of proviſion for their maintenance: under which laſt I include clothing them, giving them ſuch learning, if it is to be called by that name, as may qualify them for ſome common employment, and placing them out to it, as they grow up. Theſe two general deſigns coincide, in many reſpects, and cannot be ſeparated. For teaching the children to read, though I have ranked it under the latter, equally belongs to both: and without ſome advantages of the latter ſort, poor people would not ſend their children to our charity ſchools: nor could the pooreſt of all be admitted into any ſchools, without ſome charitable proviſion of clothing. And care is taken, that it be ſuch as cannot but be a reſtraint upon the children. And if this, or any part of their education, gives them any little vanity, as has been poorly objected, whilſt they are children, it is

ſcarce poſſible but that it will have even a quite contrary effect when they are grown up, and ever after remind them of their rank. Yet ſtill we find it is apprehended, that what they here learn may ſet them above it.

But why ſhould people be ſo extremely apprehenſive of the danger, that poor perſons will make a perverſe uſe of every the leaſt advantage, even the being able to read, whilſt they do not appear at all apprehenſive of the like danger for themſelves or their own children, in reſpect of riches or power, how much ſoever; though the danger of perverting theſe advantages is ſurely as great, and the perverſion itſelf of much greater and worſe conſequence? And by what odd reverſe of things has it happened, that ſuch, as pretend to be diſtinguiſhed for the love of liberty, ſhould be the only perſons who plead for keeping down the poor, as one may ſpeak; for keeping them more inferiour in this reſpect, and, which muſt be the conſequence, in other reſpects, than they were in times paſt? For till within a century or two, all ranks were merely upon a level as to the learning in queſtion. The art of print-

ing appears to have been providentially reſerved till theſe latter ages, and then providentially brought into uſe, as what was to be inſtrumental for the future in carrying on the appointed courſe of things. The alterations which this art has even already made in the face of the world, are not inconſiderable. By means of it, whether immediately or remotely, the methods of carrying on buſineſs are, in ſeveral reſpects, improved, *Knowlege has been increaſed**, and ſome ſort of literature is become general. And if this be a bleſſing, we ought to let the poor, in their degree, ſhare it with us. The preſent ſtate of things and courſe of providence plainly leads us to do ſo. And if we do not, it is certain, how little ſoever it be attended to, that they will be upon a greater diſadvantage, on many accounts, eſpecially in populous places, than they were in the dark ages; for they will be more ignorant, comparatively with the people about them, than they were then; and the ordinary affairs of the world are now put in a way which requires,

* Dan. xii. 4.

that they ſhould have ſome knowlege of letters, which was not the caſe then. And therefor, to bring up the poor in their former ignorance, now this knowlege is ſo much more common and wanted, would be, not to keep them in the ſame, but to put them into a lower condition of life than what they were in formerly. Nor let people of rank flatter themſelves, that ignorance will keep their inferiors more dutiful and in greater ſubjection to them; for ſurely, there muſt be danger, that it will have a contrary effect, under a free government ſuch as ours, and in a diſſolute age. Indeed the principles and manners of the poor, as to virtue and religion, will always be greatly influenced, as they always have been, by the example of their ſuperiors, if that would mend the matter. And this influence will, I ſuppoſe, be greater, if they are kept more inferior than formerly in all knowlege and improvement. But unleſs their ſuperiors of the preſent age, ſuperiors, I mean, of the middle, as well as higher ranks in ſociety, are greater examples of public ſpirit, of dutiful ſubmiſſion to authority, human and divine, of moderation in diverſi-

ons, and proper care of their families and domeſtic affairs; unleſs, I ſay, ſuperiors of the preſent age are greater examples of decency, virtue and religion, than thoſe of former times; for what reaſon in the world is it deſirable, that their example ſhould have this greater influence over the poor? On the contrary, why ſhould not the poor, by being taught to read, be put into a capacity of making ſome improvement in moral and religious knowlege, and confirming themſelves in thoſe good principles, which will be a great ſecurity for their following the example of their ſuperiors if it be good, and ſome ſort of preſervative againſt their following it if it be bad? And ſerious perſons will farther obſerve very ſingular reaſons for this amongſt us; from the diſcontinuance of that religious intercourſe between paſtors and people in private, which remains in proteſtant churches abroad, as well as in the church of Rome; and from our ſmall public care and proviſion for keeping up a ſenſe of religion in the lower rank, except by diſtributing religious books. For in this way they have been aſſiſted; and any well-diſpoſed perſon may do much good

amongſt them, and at a very trifling expence, ſince the worthy *ſociety* before-mentioned has ſo greatly leſſened the price of ſuch books. But this pious charity is an additional reaſon why the poor ſhould be taught to read, that they may be in a capacity of receiving the benefit of it. Vain indeed would be the hope, that any thing in this world can be fully ſecured from abuſe. For as it is the general ſcheme of divine providence to bring good out of evil; ſo the wickedneſs of men will, if it be poſſible, bring evil out of good. But upon the whole, incapacity and ignorance muſt be favourable to error and vice; and knowlege and improvement contribute in due time, to the deſtruction of impiety as well as ſuperſtition, and to the general prevalence of true religion. But ſome of theſe obſervations may perhaps be thought too remote from the preſent occaſion. It is more obviouſly to the purpoſe of it to obſerve, that reading, writing, and accounts, are uſeful, and, whatever cauſe it is owing to, would really now be wanted in the very loweſt ſtations: and that the *truſtees* of our charity

ſchools are fully convinced of the great fitneſs of joining to inſtruction eaſy labour, of ſome ſort or other, as faſt it is practicable; which they have already been able to do in ſome of them.

THEN as to placing out the poor children, as ſoon as they are arrived at a fit age for it; this muſt be approved by every one, as it is putting them in a way of induſtry under domeſtic government, at a time of life, in ſome reſpects, more dangerous than even childhood. And it is a known thing, that care is taken to do it in a manner which does not ſet them above their rank: though it is not poſſible always to do it exactly as one would wiſh. Yet, I hope it may be obſerved without offence, if any of them happen to be of a very weakly conſtitution, or of a very diſtinguiſhed capacity, there can be no impropriety in placing theſe in employments adapted to their particular caſes; though ſuch as would be very improper for the generality.

BUT the principal deſign of this charity is to educate poor children in ſuch a manner, as has a tendency to make them good, and uſe-

ful, and contented, whatever their particular ſtation be. The care of this is greatly neglected by the poor: nor truly is it more regarded by the rich, conſidering what might be expected from them. And if it were as practicable to provide charity ſchools, which ſhould ſupply this ſhameful neglect in the rich, as it is to ſupply the like, though more excuſable, neglect in the poor, I ſhould think certainly, that both ought to be done for the ſame reaſons. And moſt people, I hope, will think ſo too, if they attend to the thing I am ſpeaking of; which is the moral and religious part of education; what is equally neceſſary for all ranks, and grievouſly wanting in all. Yet in this reſpect the poor muſt be greatly upon a diſadvantage, from the nature of the caſe; as will appear to any one who will conſider it.

For if poor children are not ſent to ſchool, ſeveral years of their childhood, of courſe, paſs away in idleneſs, and loitering. This has a tendency to give them, perhaps, a feeble liſtleſsneſs, perhaps an headſtrong profligateneſs of mind; certainly an indiſpoſition to proper application as they grow up, and an averſion

afterwards, not only to the reſtraints of religion, but to thoſe which any particular calling, and even the nature of ſociety, require. Whereas children kept to ſtated orders, and who many hours of the day are in employment, are by this means habituated, both to ſubmit to thoſe who are placed over them, and to govern themſelves; and they are alſo by this means prepared for induſtry, in any way of life in which they may be placed. And all this holds abſtracted from the conſideration of their being taught to read; without which, however, it will be impracticable to employ their time: not to repeat the unanſwerable reaſons for it before mentioned. Now ſeveral poor people cannot, others will not be at the expence of ſending their children to ſchool. And let me add, that ſuch as can and are willing, yet if it be very inconvenient to them, ought to be eaſed of it, and the burden of children made as light as may be to their poor parents.

Consider next the manner in which the children of the poor, who have vicious parents, are brought up, in compariſon with other

children whoſe parents are of the ſame character. The children of diſſolute men of fortune may have the happineſs of not ſeeing much of their parents. And this, even though they are educated at home, is often the caſe, by means of a cuſtomary diſtance between them, which cannot be kept amongſt the poor. Nor is it impoſſible, that a rich man of this character, deſiring to have his children better than himſelf, may provide them ſuch an education as may make them ſo, without his having any reſtraint or trouble in the matter. And the education which children of better rank muſt have, for their improvement in the common accompliſhments belonging to it, is of courſe, as yet, for the moſt part, attended with ſome ſort of religious education. But the poor, as they cannot provide perſons to educate their children; ſo from the way in which they live together in poor families, a child muſt be an eye and ear-witneſs of the worſt part of his parents talk and behaviour. And it cannot but be expected, that his own will be formed upon it. For as example in general has very great influence upon all perſons, eſpecially children

the example of their parents is of authority with them, when there is nothing to balance it on the other ſide. Now take in the ſuppoſition, that theſe parents are diſſolute, profligate people; then, over and above giving their children no ſort of good inſtruction, and a very bad example, there are more crimes than one in which it may be feared, they will directly inſtruct and encourage them; beſides letting them ramble abroad wherever they will, by which, of courſe, they learn the very ſame principles and manners they do at home. And from all theſe things together, ſuch poor children will have their characters formed to vice, by thoſe whoſe buſineſs it is to reſtrain them from it. They will be diſciplined and trained up in it. This ſurely is a caſe which ought to have ſome public proviſion made for it. If it cannot have an adequate one, yet ſuch an one as it can: unleſs it be thought ſo rare as not to deſerve our attention. But in reality, tho' there ſhould be no more parents of this character amongſt the poor, in proportion, than amongſt the rich, the caſe which I have been putting will be far from being uncommon.

Now notwithſtanding the danger, to which children of ſuch wretched parents cannot but be expoſed, from what they ſee at home; yet by inſtilling into them the principles of virtue and religion at ſchool, and placing them ſoon out in ſober families, there is ground to hope, they may avoid thoſe ill courſes, and eſcape that ruin, into which, without this care, they would almoſt certainly run. I need not add how much greater ground there is to expect, that thoſe of the children who have religious parents will do well. For ſuch parents, beſides ſetting their children a good example, will likewiſe repeat and enforce upon them at home, the good inſtructions they receive at ſchool.

After all, we find the world continues very corrupt. And it would be miraculous indeed, if charity ſchools alone ſhould make it otherwiſe: or if they ſhould make even all who are brought up in them proof againſt its corruptions. The truth is, every method that can be made uſe of to prevent or reform the bad manners of the age, will appear to be of leſs effect, in proportion to the greater occaſion there is for it: as cultivation, though the moſt proper

that can, will produce leſs fruit, or of a worſe ſort, in a bad climate than in a good one. And thus the character of the common people, with whom theſe children are to live, in the ordinary intercourſe of buſineſs and company when they come out into the world, may more or leſs defeat the good effects of their education. And ſo likewiſe may the character of men of rank, under whoſe influence they are to live. But whatever danger may be apprehended from either or both of theſe, it can be no reaſon why we ſhould not endeavour, by the likelieſt methods we can, to better the world, or keep it from growing worſe. The good tendency of the method before us is unqueſtionable. And I think myſelf obliged to add, that upon a compariſon of pariſhes where charity ſchools have been for a conſiderable time eſtabliſhed, with neighbouring ones, in like ſituations, which have had none, the good effects of them, as I am very credibly informed, are moſt manifeſt. Notwithſtanding I freely own, that it is extremely difficult to make the neceſſary compariſons in this caſe, and form a judgment upon them. And a multitude of circum-

ſtances muſt come in to determine, from appearances only concerning the poſitive good which is produced by this charity, and the evil which is prevented by it; which laſt is full as material as the former, and can ſcarce be eſtimated at all. But ſurely there can be no doubt, whether it be uſeful or not, to educate children in order, virtue and religion.

However, ſuppoſe, which is yet far from being the caſe, but ſuppoſe it ſhould ſeem, that this undertaking did not anſwer the expence and trouble of it, in the civil or political way of conſidering things. What is this to perſons who profeſs to be engaged in it, not only upon mere civil views, but upon moral and chriſtian ones? We are to do our endeavours to promote virtue and religion amongſt men, and leave the ſucceſs to God: the deſigns of his providence are anſwered by theſe endeavours, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear;* that is, whatever be the ſucceſs of them: and the leaſt ſucceſs in ſuch endeavours is a great and valuable effect*.

* See the Sermon before the Society *for the Propagation of the Goſpel.*

FROM theſe foregoing obſervations, duly conſidered, it will appear, that the objections which have been made againſt charity ſchools, are to be regarded in the ſame light with thoſe which are made againſt any other neceſſary things; for inſtance, againſt providing for the ſick and aged poor. Objections in this latter caſe could be conſidered no otherwiſe than merely as warnings of ſome inconvenience which might accompany ſuch charity, and might, more or leſs, be guarded againſt, the charity itſelf being ſtill kept up; or as propoſals for placing it upon ſome better foot. For though, amidſt the diſorder and imperfection in all human things, theſe objections were not obviated, they could not however poſſibly be underſtood as reaſons for diſcontinuing ſuch charity; becauſe thus underſtood, they would be reaſons for leaving neceſſitous people to periſh. Well-diſpoſed perſons therefor will take care, that they be not deluded with objections againſt this before us, any more than againſt other neceſſary charities; as though ſuch objections were reaſons for ſuppreſſing them, or not contributing to their ſupport, unleſs we

can procure an alteration of that to which we object. There can be no poſſible reaſons for leaving poor children in that imminent danger of ruin, in which many of theſe muſt be left, were it not for this charity. Therefor objections againſt it cannot, from the nature of the caſe, amount to more than reaſons for endeavouring, whether with or without ſucceſs, to put it upon a right and unexceptionable foot, in the particular reſpects objected againſt. And if this be the intention of the objectors, the managers of it hath ſhewn themſelves remarkably ready to ſecond them: for they have ſhewn even a docility in receiving admonitions of any thing thought amiſs in it, and propoſals for rendering it more complete. And, under the influence of this good ſpirit, the management of it is really improving; particularly in greater endeavours to introduce manufactures into theſe ſchools; and in more particular care to place the children out to employments in which they are moſt wanted, and may be moſt ſerviceable, and which are moſt ſuitable to their ranks. But if there be any thing in the management of them, which ſome particular per-

ſons think ſhould be altered, and others are of a contrary opinion, theſe things muſt be referred to the judgement of the public, and the determination of the public complied with. Such compliance is an eſſential principle of all charitable aſſociations; for without it they could not ſubſiſt at all: and by charitable aſſociations, multitudes are put in mind to do good, who otherwiſe would not have thought of it; and infinitely more good may be done, than poſſibly can by the ſeparate endeavours of the ſame number of charitable perſons. Now he who refuſes to help forward the good work before us, becauſe it is not conducted exactly in his own way, breaks in upon that general principle of union; which thoſe, who are friends to the indigent and diſtreſſed part of our fellow-creatures, will be very cautious how they do in any caſe: but more eſpecially will they beware, how they break in upon that neceſſary principle in a caſe of ſo great importance as is the preſent. For the public is as much intereſted in the education of poor children, as in the preſervation of their lives.

THIS laſt, I obſerved, is legally provided for. The former is left amongſt other works of charity, neglected by many who care for none of theſe things, and to be carried on by ſuch only as think it their concern to be doing good. Some of you are able, and in a ſituation, to aſſiſt in it in an eminent degree, by being *truſtees*, and overlooking the management of theſe ſchools; or in different ways countenancing and recommending them; as well as by contributing to their maintenance: others can aſſiſt only in this latter way. In what manner and degree then it belongs to you, and to me, and to any particular perſon to help it forward, let us all conſider ſeriouſly, not for one another, but each of us for himſelf.

AND may the bleſſing of Almighty God accompany this work of charity, which He has put into the hearts of his ſervants, in behalf of theſe poor children: that being now *trained up in the way they ſhould go, when they are old they may not depart from it*. May He, of his mercy, keep them ſafe

amidſt the innumerable dangers of this bad world, through which they are to paſs, and preſerve them unto his heavenly kingdom.

A SERMON

Preached before the

HOUSE of LORDS,

IN THE

Abbey Church of *Weſtminſter*,

On Thurſday, June 11, 1747.

Being the Anniverſary of his MAJESTY'S happy Acceſſion to the Throne.

1 TIM. ii. 1, 2.

I exhort, that firſt of all, ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty.

IT is impoſſible to deſcribe the general end, which providence has appointed us to aim

at in our paſſage through the preſent world, in more expreſſive words, than theſe very plain ones of the apoſtle, *to lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godlineſs and honeſty: a quiet and peaceable life*, by way of diſtinction, ſurely, from eager, tumultuary purſuits in our private capacity, as well as in oppoſition both to our making inſurrections in the ſtate, and to our ſuffering oppreſſion from it. *To lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty*, is the whole that we have any reaſon to be concerned for. To this the conſtitution of our nature carries us: and our external condition is adapted to it.

Now in aid to this general appointment of providence, civil government has been inſtituted over the world, both by the light of nature and by revelation, to inſtruct men in the duties of fidelity, juſtice, and regard to common good, and enforce the practice of theſe virtues, without which there could have been no place or quiet amongſt mankind; and to preſerve, in different ways, a ſenſe of religion, as well as virtue, and of God's authority over us. For if we could ſuppoſe men to have

lived out of government, they muſt have run wild, and all knowlege of divine things muſt have been loſt from among them. But by means of their uniting under it, they have been preſerved in ſome tolerable ſecurity from the fraud and violence of each other; order, a ſenſe of virtue, and the practice of it, has been in ſome meaſure kept up; and religion, more or leſs pure, has been all along ſpread and propagated. So that I make no ſcruple to affirm, that civil govenment has been, in all ages, a ſtanding publication of the law of nature, and an enforcement of it; though never in its perfection, for the moſt part greatly corrupted, and I ſuppoſe always ſo in ſome degree.

And, conſidering, that civil government is that part of God's government over the world, which he exerciſes by the inſtrumentality of men, wherein, that which is oppreſſion, injuſtice, cruelty, as coming from them, is, under his direction, neceſſary diſcipline, and juſt puniſhment; conſidering that *all power is of God**,

* Rom xiii. 1.

all authority is properly of divine appointment; men's very living under magiſtracy might naturally have led them to the contemplation of authority in its ſource and origin; the one, ſupreme, abſolute authority of Almighty God; by which he *doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth**: which he now exerts, viſibly and inviſibly, by different inſtruments, in different forms of adminiſtration, different methods of diſcipline and puniſhment; and which he will continue to exert hereafter, not only over mankind when this mortal life ſhall be ended, but throughout his univerſal kingdom; till, by having rendered to all according to their works, he ſhall have compleatly executed that juſt ſcheme of government, which he has already begun to execute in this world, by their hands, whom he has appointed, for the preſent † *puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well.*

And though that perfection of juſtice cannot in any ſort take place in this world, even

* Dan. iv. 35. † 1 Peter ii. 14.

under the very beſt governments; yet under the worſt, men have been enabled to lead much more quiet and peaceable lives, as well as attend to and keep up a ſenſe of religion much more, than they could poſſibly have done without any government at all. But a free chriſtian government is adapted to anſwer theſe purpoſes in a higher degree, in proportion to its juſt liberty, and the purity of its religious eſtabliſhment. And as we enjoy theſe advantages, civil and religious, in a very eminent degree, under a good prince, and thoſe he has placed in authority over us, we are eminently obliged to offer up ſupplications and thankſgivings in their behalf; to pay them all that duty which theſe prayers imply; and *to lead*, as thoſe advantages enable and have a tendency to diſpoſe us to do, *quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty*.

Of the former of theſe advantages, our free conſtitution of civil government, we ſeem to have a very high value. And if we would keep clear from abuſes of it, it could not be overvalued; otherwiſe than as every thing may, when conſidered as reſpecting this world

only. We ſeem, I ſay, ſufficiently ſenſible of the value of our civil liberty. It is our daily boaſt, and we are in the higheſt degree jealous of it. Would to God we were ſomewhat more judicious in our jealouſy of it, ſo as to guard againſt its chief enemy, one might ſay, the only enemy of it, we have at preſent to fear, I mean licentiouſneſs; which has undermined ſo many free governments, and without whoſe treacherous help no free government, perhaps, ever was undermined. This licentiouſneſs indeed, is not only dangerous to liberty, but it is actually a preſent enfringement of it in many inſtances.—But I muſt not turn this good day into a day of reproach. Dropping then the encroachments which are made upon our liberty, peace and quiet by licentiouſneſs, we are certainly a freer nation than any other we have an account of; and as free, it ſeems, as the very nature of government will permit. Every man is equally under the protection of the laws; may have equal juſtice againſt the moſt rich and powerful; and ſecurely enjoy all the common bleſſings of life, with which the induſtry of his anceſtors, or his own has

furniſhed him. In ſome other countries the upper part of the world is free, but in Great-Britain the whole body of the people is free. For we have at length, to the diſtinguiſhed honour of thoſe who began, and have more particularly laboured in it, emancipated our northern provinces from moſt of their legal remains of ſlavery: for voluntary ſlavery cannot be aboliſhed, at leaſt not directly, by law. I take leave to ſpeak of this long-deſired work as done; ſince it wants only his concurrence, who, as we have found by many years experience, conſiders the good of his people as his own. And I cannot but look upon theſe acts of the legiſlature in a further view, as inſtances of regard to poſterity; and declarations of its readineſs to put every ſubject upon an equal foot of ſecurity and freedom, if any of them are not ſo, in any other reſpects, which come into its view; and as a precedent and example for doing it.

LIBERTY, which is the very genius of our civil conſtitution, and runs through every branch of it, extends its influence to the eccleſiaſtical part of it. A religious eſtabliſhment

without a toleration of ſuch as think they cannot in conſcience conform to it, is itſelf a general tyranny; becauſe it claims abſolute authority over conſcience: and would ſoon beget particular kinds of tyranny of the worſe ſort, tyranny over the mind, and various ſuperſtitions; after the way ſhould be paved for them, as it ſoon muſt, by ignorance. On the other hand, a conſtitution of civil government without any religious eſtabliſhment, is a chimerical project, of which there is no example: and which, leaving the generality without guide and inſtruction, muſt leave religion to be ſunk and forgotten amongſt them; and at the ſame time give full ſcope to ſuperſtition, and the gloom of enthuſiaſm; which laſt, eſpecially, ought ſurely to be diverted and checked, as far as it can be done without force. Now a reaſonable eſtabliſhment provides inſtruction for the ignorant, withdraws them, not in the way of force but of guidance, from running after thoſe kinds of conceits. It doubtleſs has a tendency likewiſe to keep up a ſenſe of real religion, and real chriſtianity in a nation: and is moreover neceſſary for the encouragement

of learning; ſome parts of which the ſcripture-revelation abſolutely requires ſhould be cultivated.

It is to be remarked further, that the value of any particular religious eſtabliſhment is not to be eſtimated merely by what it is in itſelf, but alſo by what it is in compariſon with thoſe of other nations; a compariſon which will ſufficiently teach us not to expect perfection in human things. And what is ſtill more material, the value of our own ought to be very much heightened in our eſteem, by conſidering what it is a ſecurity from; I mean that great corruption of chriſtianity, popery, which is ever hard at work to bring us again under its yoke. Whoever will conſider the popiſh claims, to the diſpoſal of the whole earth, as of divine right, to diſpenſe with the moſt ſacred engagements, the claims to ſupreme abſolute authority in religion; in ſhort, the general claims which the Canoniſts expreſs by the words, *plentitude of power*—whoever, I ſay, will conſider popery as it is profeſſed at Rome, may ſee, that it is manifeſt, open uſurpation of all human and divine authority. But even in

thoſe Roman-catholic countries where theſe monſtrous claims are not admitted, and the civil power does, in many reſpects, reſtrain the papal; yet perſecution is profeſſed, as it is abſolutely injoined by what is acknowleged to be their higheſt authority, a general council, ſo called, with the Pope at the head of it; and is practiſed in all of them, I think without exception, where it can be done ſafely. Thus they go on to ſubſtitute force inſtead of argument; and external profeſſion made by force inſtead of reaſonable conviction. And thus corruptions of the groſſeſt ſort have been in vogue, for many generations, in many parts of Chriſtendom; and are ſo ſtill, even where popery obtains in its leaſt abſurd form: and their antiquity and wide extent are inſiſted upon as proofs of their truth; a kind of proof, which at beſt can be only preſumptive, but which looſes all its little weight, in proportion as the long and large prevalence of ſuch corruptions have been obtained by force.

INDEED it is ſaid in the book of Job, that the worſhip of *the ſun and moon was an ini-*

*quity to be puniſhed by the judge**. And this, though it is not ſo much as a precept, much leſs a general one, is, I think, the only paſſage of ſcripture, which can with any colour be alleged in favour of perſecution of any ſort: for what the Jews did, and what they were commanded to do, under their theocracy, are both quite out of the caſe. But whenever that book was written, the ſcene of it is laid at a time when idolatry was in its infancy, an acknowleged novelty, eſſentially deſtructive of true religion, ariſing, perhaps, from mere wantonneſs of imagination. In theſe circumſtances, this greateſt of evils, which afterwards laid waſte true religion over the face of the earth, might have been ſuppreſſed at once, without danger of miſtake or abuſe. And one might go on to add, that if thoſe to whom the care of this belonged, inſtead of ſerving themſelves of prevailing ſuperſtitions, had in all ages and countries oppoſed them in their riſe; and adhered faithfully to that primitive religion, which was received *of old, ſince man*

* Job xxxi. 26, 27, 28.

*was placed upon earth**; there could not poſſibly have been any ſuch difference of opinion concerning the Almighty Governor of the world, as could have given any pretence for tolerating the idolatries which overſpread it. On the contrary, his univerſal monarchy muſt have been univerſally recognized, and the general laws of it more aſcertained and known, than the municipal ones of any particular country can be. In ſuch a ſtate of religion, as it could not but have been acknowleged by all mankind, that immorality of every ſort was diſloyalty to Him, *the high and lofty one that inhabited eternity, whoſe name is holy*†; ſo it could not but have been manifeſt, that idolatry, in thoſe determinate inſtances of it, was plain rebellion againſt him: and therefor might have been puniſhed as an offence, of the higheſt kind, againſt the ſupreme authority in nature. But this is in no ſort applicable to the preſent ſtate of religion in the world. For if the principle of puniſhing idolatry was now admitted, amongſt the ſeveral different parties

* Job xx. 4. † Iſaiah lvii. 15.

in religion, the weakeſt in every place would run a great riſque of being convicted of it; or however hereſy and ſchiſm would ſoon be found crimes of the ſame nature, and equally deſerving puniſhment. Thus the ſpirit of perſecution would range without any ſtop or controul, but what would ariſe from its want of power. But our religious eſtabliſhment diſclaims all principles of this kind, and deſires not to keep perſons in its communion, or gain proſelytes to it, by any other methods than the chriſtian ones of argument and conviction.

THESE hints may ſerve to remind us of the value, we ought to ſet upon our conſtitution in church and ſtate, the advantages of which are the proper ſubjects of our commemoration on this day, as his majeſty has ſhewn himſelf, not in words but in the whole courſe of his reign, the guardian and protector of both. And the bleſſings of his reign are not only rendered more ſenſible, but are really heightened, by its ſecuring us from that pretender to his crown, whom we had almoſt forgot, till our late danger renewed our apprehenſions; who, we know, is a profeſſed enemy to our church;

and grown old in reſentments, and maxims of government directly contrary to our civil conſtitution; nay his very claim is founded in principles deſtructive of it. Our deliverance and our ſecurity from this danger, with all the other bleſſings of the king's government, are ſo many reaſons, for *ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, and giving of thanks*, to which we are exhorted; as well as for all other dutiful behaviour towards it; and ſhould alſo remind us to take care and make due improvement of thoſe bleſſings, by *leading*, in the enjoyment of them, *quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty*.

The Jewiſh church offered ſacrifices even for heathen princes to whom they were in ſubjection: and the primitive chriſtian church, the chriſtian ſacrifices of ſupplications and prayers, for the proſperity of the emperor, and the ſtate; though they were falſely accuſed of being enemies to both, becauſe they would not join in their idolatries. In conformity to theſe examples of the church of God in all ages, prayers for the king and thoſe in authority under him, are part of the daily ſervice of our own.

And for the day of his inauguration a particular ſervice is appointed, which we are here aſſembled in the houſe of God to celebrate. This is the firſt duty we owe to kings, and thoſe who are in authority under them, that we make prayers and thankſgivings for them. And in it is comprehended, what yet may be conſidered as another, paying them honour and reverence. Praying for them is itſelf an inſtance and expreſſion of this, as it gives them a part in our higheſt ſolemnities. It alſo reminds us of that further honour and reverence which we are to pay them, as occaſions offer, throughout the whole courſe of our behaviour. *Fear God, honour the king* *, are apoſtolic precepts; and *deſpiſing goverment, and ſpeaking evil of dignities* *, apoſtolic deſcriptions of ſuch as *are reſerved unto the day of judgment to be puniſhed*†. And if theſe evil ſpeeches are highly criminal, it cannot be a thing very innocent to make a cuſtom of entertaining ourſelves with them.

FURTHER, if we are to pray, *that we may*,

* Pet. ii. 17. † 2 Pet. ii. 10, 9.

that it may be permitted us, *to lead a quiet and peaceable life*, we ought ſurely to live ſo, when, by means of a mild, equal government, it is permitted us: and be very thankful, firſt to God, and then to thoſe whom he makes the inſtruments of ſo great good to us, and pay them all obedience and duty; though every thing be not conducted according to our judgment, nor every perſon in employment whom we may think deſerving of it. Indeed oppoſition, in a legal, regular way, to meaſures which a perſon thinks wrong, cannot but be allowed in a free government. It is in itſelf juſt, and alſo keeps up the ſpirit of liberty. But oppoſition, from indirect motives, to meaſures which he ſees to be neceſſary, is itſelf immoral: it keeps up the ſpirit of licentiouſneſs; is the greateſt reproach of liberty, and in many ways moſt dangerous to it; and has been a principal means of overturning free governments. It is well too if the legal ſubjection to the government we live under, which may accompany ſuch behaviour, be not the reverſe of chriſtian ſubjection; *ſubjection for*

*wrath only, and not for conſcience ſake**. And one who wiſhes well to his country will beware, how he inflames the common people againſt meaſures, whether right or wrong, which they are not judges of. For no one can foreſee how far ſuch diſaffection will extend; but every one ſees, that it diminiſhes the reverence, which is certainly owing to authority. Our due regards to theſe things are indeed inſtances of our patriotiſm too. Happy the people who live under a prince, the juſtice of whoſe government renders them coincident!

Laſtly, As by the good providence of God we are born under a free government, and are members of a pure reformed church, both of which he has wonderfully preſerved through infinite dangers; if we do not take heed to live like chriſtians, nor to govern ourſelves with decency in thoſe reſpects in which we are free, we ſhall be a diſhonour to both. Both are moſt juſtly to be valued: but they may be valued in the wrong place. It is no more a recommendation of civil, than it is of na-

* Rom. xiii. 5.

tural liberty *, that it muſt put us in a capacity of behaving ill. Let us then value our civil conſtitution, not becauſe it leaves us the power of acting as mere humour and paſſion carries us, in thoſe reſpects, in which governments leſs free lay men under reſtraints; but for its equal laws, by which the great are diſabled from oppreſſing thoſe below them. Let us transfer, each of us, the equity of this our civil conſtitution to our whole perſonal character; and be ſure to be as much afraid of ſubjection to mere arbitrary will and pleaſure in ourſelves, as to the arbitrary will of others. For the tyranny of our own lawleſs paſſions is the neareſt and moſt dangerous of all tyrannies.

THEN as to the other part of our conſtitution; let us value it, not becauſe it leaves us at liberty to have as little religion as we pleaſe, without being accountable to human judicatories; but becauſe it affords us the means and aſſiſtances to worſhip God according to his word; becauſe it exhibits to our view, and en-

* Natural liberty as oppoſed to neceſſity, or fate.

forces upon our conſcience, genuine chriſtianity, free from the ſuperſtitions with which it is defiled in other countries. Theſe ſuperſtitions naturally tend to abate its force: our profeſſion of it, in its purity, is a particular call upon us to yield ourſelves up to its full influence; *to be pure in heart* *; *to be holy in all manner of converſation* †. Much of *the form of godlineſs* is laid aſide amongſt us: this itſelf ſhould admoniſh us to attend more to *the power thereof* ‡. We have diſcarded many burdenſome ceremonies: let us be the more careful to cultivate inward religion. We have thrown off a multitude of ſuperſtitious practices, which were called good works: let us the more abound in all moral virtues, theſe being unqueſtionably ſuch. Thus our lives will juſtify and recommend the reformation; and we ſhall ‖ *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

* Matth. v. 8. † 1 Peter i. 18. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 5.
‖ Titus ii. 10.

A

SERMON

Preached before his GRACE

CHARLES Duke of Richmond,

PRESIDENT;

And the GOVERNORS of the

LONDON INFIRMARY,

For the Relief of Sick and Diſeaſed Perſons, eſpecially MANUFACTURERS, and SEAMEN in Merchant-Service, etc.

At the Pariſh Church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, On Thurſday, March 31, 1748.

1 PET. iv. 8.

And above all things have fervent charity among yourſelves: for charity ſhall cover the multitude of ſins.

AS we owe our being, and all our faculties, and the very opportunities of exerting them, to Almighty God, and are plainly his and not our own, we are admoniſhed, even

though we ſhould *have done all thoſe things which are commanded us, to ſay, We are unprofitable ſervants* *. And with much deeper humility muſt we make this acknowlegement, when we conſider, in how *many things we have all offended* †. But ſtill the behaviour of ſuch creatures as men, highly criminal in ſome reſpects, may yet in others be ſuch, as to render them the proper objects of mercy, and, our Saviour does not decline ſaying, *thought worthy of it* ‡. And, conformably to our natural ſenſe of things, the ſcripture is very expreſs, that mercy, forgiveneſs, and, in general, charity to our fellow-creatures, has this efficacy in a very high degree.

SEVERAL copious and remote reaſons have been alleged, why ſuch pre-eminence is given to this grace or virtue; ſome of great importance, and none of them perhaps without its weight. But the proper one ſeems to be very ſhort and obvious, that by fervent charity, with a courſe of beneficence proceeding from it, a perſon may make amends for the good he has

* Luke xvii. 10 † James iii. 2. ‡ Luke xx. 35.

blameably omitted, and the injuries he has done, ſo far, as that ſociety would have no demand upon him for ſuch his miſbehaviour; nor conſequently would juſtice have any in behalf of ſociety, whatever it might have upon other accounts. Thus by fervent charity he may even merit forgiveneſs of men: and this ſeems to afford a very ſingular reaſon, why it may be graciouſly granted him by God; a very ſingular reaſon, the chriſtian covenant of pardon always ſuppoſed, why divine juſtice ſhould permit, and divine mercy appoint, that ſuch his charity ſhould be allowed to *cover the multitude of ſins*.

And this reaſon leads me to obſerve, what ſcripture, and the whole nature of the thing ſhews, that the charity here meant muſt be ſuch hearty love to our fellow-creatures, as produceth a ſettled endeavour to promote, according to the beſt of our judgment, their real laſting good, both preſent and future; and not that eaſineſs of temper, which, with peculiar propriety, is expreſſed by the word good-humour, and is a ſort of benevolent inſtinct left to itſelf, without the direction of

our judgment. For this kind of good-humour is ſo far from making the amends beforementioned, that though it be agreeable in converſation, it is often moſt miſchievous in every other intercourſe of life; and always puts men out of a capacity of doing the good they might, if they could withſtand importunity, and the ſight of diſtreſs, when the caſe requires they ſhould be withſtood: many inſtances of which caſe daily occur, both in public and private. Nor is it to be ſuppoſed, that we can any more promote the laſting good of our fellow-creatures, by acting from mere kind inclinations, without conſidering what are the proper means of promoting it, than that we can attain our own perſonal good, by a thoughtleſs purſuit of every thing which pleaſes us. For the love of our neighbour, as much as ſelf-love, the ſocial affections, as much as the private ones, from their very nature, require to be under the direction of our judgment. Yet it is to be remembered, that it does in no ſort become ſuch a creature as man to harden himſelf againſt the diſtreſſes of his neighbour, except where it is really neceſſary; and that even well-

diſpoſed perſons may run into great perplexities, and great miſtakes too, by being over-ſolicitous in diſtinguiſhing, what are the moſt proper occaſions for their charity, or who the greateſt objects of it. And therefor, as, on the one ſide, we are obliged to take ſome care not to ſquander that which, one may ſay, belongs to the poor, as we ſhall do, unleſs we competently ſatisfy ourſelves beforehand, that what we put to our account of charity will anſwer ſome good purpoſe; ſo, on the other ſide, when we are competently ſatisfied of this, in any particular inſtance before us, we ought by no means to neglect ſuch preſent opportunity of doing good, under the notion of making further inquiries: for of theſe delays there will be no end.

HAVING thus briefly laid before you the ground of that ſingular efficacy, which the text aſcribes to charity in general; obviated the objection againſt its having this efficacy; and diſtinguiſhed the virtue itſelf from its counterfeits; let us now proceed to obſerve the genuineneſs and excellency of the particular cha-

rity, which we are here met together to promote.

MEDICINE and every other relief, under the calamity of bodily diſeaſes and caſualties, no leſs then the daily neceſſaries of life, are natural proviſions, which God has made for our preſent indigent ſtate; and which he has granted in common to the children of men, whether they be poor or rich: to the rich by inheritance, or acquiſition; and by their hands to the diſabled poor.

NOR can there be any doubt, but that public infirmaries are the moſt effectual means of adminiſtering ſuch relief; beſides that they are attended with incidental advantages of great importance: both which things have been fully ſhewn, and excellently enforced, in the annual ſermons upon this and the like occaſions.

BUT indeed public infirmaries are not only the beſt, they are the only poſſible means by which the poor, eſpecially in this city, can be provided, in any competent meaſure, with the ſeveral kinds of aſſiſtance, which bodily diſeaſes and caſualties require. Not to mention

poor foreigners; it is obvious no other provision can be made for poor ſtrangers out of the country, when they are overtaken by theſe calamities, as they often muſt be, whilſt they are occaſionally attending their affairs in this centre of buſineſs. But even the poor who are ſettled here, are in a manner ſtrangers to the people amongſt whom they live: and were it not for this proviſion, muſt unavoidably be neglected, in the hurry and concourſe around them, and be left unobſerved to languiſh in ſickneſs, and ſuffer extremely, much more than they could in leſs populous places; where every one is known to every one; and any great diſtreſs, preſently, becomes the common talk; and where alſo poor families are often under the particular protection of ſome or other of their rich neighbours, in a very different way from what is commonly the caſe here. Obſervations of this kind ſhew, that there is a peculiar occaſion, and even a neceſſity, in ſuch a city as this, for public infirmaries, to which eaſy admittance may be had, and here in ours no ſecurity is required, nor any ſort of gratification allowed; and that they ought to be

multiplied, or enlarged, proportionably to the increaſe of our inhabitants: for to this the increaſe of the poor will always bear proportion; though leſs in ages of ſobriety and diligence, and greater in ages of profuſion and debauchery.

Now though nothing, to be called an objection in the way of argument, can be alleged againſt thus providing for poor ſick people, in the propereſt, indeed the only way in which they can be provided for; yet perſons of too ſevere tempers can, even upon this occaſion, talk in a manner, which, contrary ſurely to their intention, has a very malignant influence upon the ſpirit of charity—talk of the ill-deſerts of the poor, the good uſes they might make of being let to ſuffer more than they do, under diſtreſſes which they bring upon themſelves, or however might, by diligence and frugality, provide againſt; and the idle uſes they may make of knowing before-hand, that they ſhall be relieved in caſe of thoſe diſtreſſes. Indeed there is ſuch a thing as a prejudice againſt them, ariſing from their very poverty, which ought greatly to be guarded againſt; a kind of prejudice, to which perhaps

moſt of us, upon ſome occaſions, and in ſome degree, may attentively be liable, but which pride and intereſt may eaſily work up to a ſettled hatred of them; the utter reverſe of that amiable part of the character of Job, that *he was a father to the poor**. But it is undoubtedly fit, that ſuch of them as are good and induſtrious ſhould have the ſatisfaction of knowing beforehand, that they ſhall be relieved under diſeaſes and caſualties: and thoſe, it is moſt obvious, ought to be relieved preferable to others. But theſe others, who are not of that good character, might poſſibly have the apprehenſion of thoſe calamities in ſo great a degree, as would be very miſchievous, and of no ſervice, if they thought they muſt be left to periſh under them. And though their idleneſs and extravagance are very inexcuſable, and ought by all reaſonable methods to be reſtrained; and they are highly to be blamed for not making ſome proviſion againſt age and ſuppoſeable diſaſters, when it is in their power; yet it is not to be deſired, that the anxieties of avarice ſhould be added to the natural inconveniencies of poverty.

* Job xxix. 16.

It is ſaid, that our common fault towards the poor is not harſhneſs, but too great lenity and indulgence. And if allowing them in debauchery, idleneſs and open beggary; in drunkenneſs, profane curſing and ſwearing in our ſtreets, nay in our houſes of correction; if this be lenity, there is doubtleſs a great deal too much of it. And ſuch lenity towards the poor is very conſiſtent with the moſt cruel neglects of them, in the extreme miſery to which thoſe vices reduce them. Now though this laſt certainly is not our general fault; yet it cannot be ſaid, every one is free from it. For this reaſon, and that nothing, which has ſo much as the ſhadow of an objection againſt our public charities, may be entirely paſſed over, you will give me leave to conſider a little the ſuppoſed caſe above-mentioned, though poſſibly ſome may think it unneceſſary, that of perſons reduced to poverty and diſtreſs by their own faults.

Instances of this there certainly are. But it ought to be very diſtinctly obſerved, that in judging which are ſuch, we are liable to be miſtaken: and more liable to it, in judging to what degree thoſe are faulty, who really are

ſo in ſome degree. However, we ſhould always look with mildneſs upon the behaviour of the poor; and be ſure not to expect more from them than can be expected, in a moderate way of conſidering things. We ſhould be forward, not only to admit and encourage the good-deſerts of ſuch as do well, but likewiſe as to thoſe of them who do not, be ever ready to make due allowances for their bad education, or, which is the ſame, their having had none; for what may be owing to the ill example of their ſuperiors, as well as companions, and for temptations of all kinds. And remember always, that be men's vices what they will, they have not forfeited their claim to relief under neceſſities, till they have forfeited their lives to juſtice.

*Our heavenly father is kind to the unthankful and to the evil: and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt**. And, in imitation of him, our Saviour expreſsly requires, that our beneficence be promiſcuous. But we have moreover the divine example for relieving thoſe diſtreſſes, which are brought upon perſons by their own faults; and this is exactly the caſe

* Matth. v. 45. Luke vi 35.

we are conſidering. Indeed the general diſpenſation of chriſtianity is an example of this; for its general deſign is to ſave us from our ſins, and the puniſhments which would have been the juſt conſequence of them. But the divine example, in the daily courſe of nature, is a more obvious and ſenſible one. And though the natural miſeries which are foreſeen to be annexed to a vicious courſe of life, are providentially intended to prevent it, in the ſame manner as civil penalties are intended to prevent civil crimes; yet thoſe miſeries, thoſe natural penalties admit of, and receive natural reliefs, no leſs than any other miſeries, which could not have been foreſeen or prevented. Charitable providence then, thus manifeſted in the courſe of nature, which is the example of our heavenly Father, moſt evidently lead us to relieve, not only ſuch diſtreſſes as were unavoidable, but alſo ſuch as people by their own faults have brought upon themſelves. The caſe is, that we cannot judge in what degree it was intended they ſhould ſuffer, by conſidering what, in the natural courſe of things, would be the whole bad conſequences of their faults, if thoſe conſequences were not prevented, when nature has provided means to pre-

vent great part of them. We cannot, for inſtance, eſtimate what degree of preſent ſufferings God has annexed to drunkenneſs, by conſidering the diſeaſes which follow from this vice, as they would be if they admitted of no reliefs or remedies: but by conſidering the remaining miſery of thoſe diſeaſes, after the application of ſuch remedies as nature has provided. For as it is certain on the one ſide, that thoſe diſeaſes are providential corrections of intemperance, it is as certain on the other, that the remedies are providential mitigations of thoſe corrections; and altogether as much providential, when adminiſtered by the good hand of charity in the caſe of our neighbour, as when adminiſtered by ſelf-love in our own. Thus the pain, and danger, and other diſtreſſes of ſickneſs and poverty remaining, after all the charitable relief which can be procured; and the many uneaſy circumſtances which cannot but accompany that relief, though diſtributed with all ſuppoſeable humanity; theſe are the natural corrections of idleneſs and debauchery, ſuppoſing theſe vices brought on thoſe miſeries. And very ſevere corrections they are: and they ought not to be encreaſed by withholding that

relief, or by harſhneſs in the diſtribution of it. Corrections of all kinds, even the moſt neceſſary ones, may eaſily exceed their proper bound: and when they do ſo, they become miſchievous; and miſchievous in the meaſure they exceed it. And the natural corrections, which we have been ſpeaking of, would be exceſſive, if the natural mitigations provided for them were not adminiſtered.

THEN perſons, who are ſo ſcrupulouſly apprehenſive of every thing which can poſſibly, in the moſt indirect manner, encourage idleneſs and vice; which, by the way, any thing may accidentally do; ought to turn their thoughts to the moral and religious tendency of infirmities. The religious manner in which they are carried on has itſelf a direct tendency to bring the ſubject of religion into the conſideration of thoſe whom they relieve; and, in ſome degree, to recommend it to their love and practice, as it is productive of ſo much good to them, as reſtored eaſe and health, and a capacity of reſuming their ſeveral employments. It is to virtue and religion, they may mildly be admoniſhed, that they are indebted for their relief. And this, amongſt other ad-

monitions of their ſpiritual guide, and the quiet and order of their houſe, out of the way of bad examples, together with a regular courſe of devotion, which it were greatly to be wiſhed might be daily; theſe means, it is to be hoped, with the common grace of God, may enforce deeply upon their conſciences thoſe ſerious conſiderations, to which a ſtate of affliction naturally renders the mind attentive, and that they will return, as from a religious retreat, to their ſeveral employments in the world, with laſting impreſſions of piety in their hearts. By ſuch united advantages, which theſe poor creatures can in no ſort have any other way, very remarkable reformations have been wrought. Perſons of the ſtricteſt characters therefor would give a more ſatisfactory proof, not to the world, but to their own conſciences, of their deſire to ſuppreſs vice and idleneſs, by ſetting themſelves to cultivate the religious part of the inſtitution of infirmaries, which, I think, would admit of great improvements; than by allowing themſelves to talk in a manner, which tends to diſcountenance either

the inſtitution itſelf, or any particular branch of it.

ADMITTING then the uſefulneſs and neceſſity of theſe kinds of charity, which indeed cannot be denied; yet every thing hath its bounds. And, in the ſpirit of ſeverity before mentioned, it is imagined, that people are enough diſpoſed, ſuch, it ſeems, is the preſent turn, to contribute largely to them. And ſome, whether from diſlike of the charities themſelves, or from mere profligateneſs, think theſe formal recommendations of them at church every year, might very well be ſpared.

BUT ſurely it is deſirable, that a cuſtomary way ſhould be kept open for removing prejudices as they may ariſe againſt theſe inſtitutions; for rectifying any miſrepreſentations which may, at any time, be made of them; and informing the public of any new emergencies; as well as for repeatedly enforcing the known obligations of charity, and the excellency of this particular kind of it. Then ſermons, you know, amongſt Proteſtants, always of courſe accompany theſe more ſolemn appearances in the houſe of God: nor will

theſe latter be kept up without the other. Now public devotions ſhould ever attend, and conſecrate public charities. And it would be a ſad preſage of the decay of theſe charities, if ever they ſhould ceaſe to be profeſſedly carried on in the fear of God, and upon the principles of religion. It may be added, that real charitable perſons will approve of theſe frequent exhortations to charity, even though they ſhould be conſcious, that they do not themſelves ſtand in need of them, upon account of ſuch as do. And ſuch can poſſibly have no right to complain of being too often admoniſhed of their duty, till they are pleaſed to practiſe it. It is true indeed, we have the ſatisfaction of ſeeing a ſpirit of beneficence prevail, in a very commendable degree, amongſt all ranks of people, and in a very diſtinguiſhed manner in ſome perſons amongſt the higheſt; yet it is evident, too many of all ranks are very deficient in it, who are of great ability, and of whom much might be expected. Though every thing therefor were done in behalf of the poor which is wanted, yet theſe perſons ought repeatedly to be told, how highly blameable

they are for letting it be done without them; and done by perſons, of whom great numbers muſt have much leſs ability than they.

But whoever can really think, that the neceſſities of the diſabled poor are ſufficiently provided for already, muſt be ſtrangely prejudiced. If one were to ſend you to themſelves to be better informed, you would readily anſwer, that their demands would be very extravagant; that perſons are not to be their own judges in claims of juſtice, much leſs in thoſe of charity. You then, I am ſpeaking to the hard people above-mentioned, you are to judge, what proviſion is to be made for the neceſſitous, ſo far as it depends upon your contributions. But ought you not to remember, that you are intereſted, that you are parties in the affair, as well as they. For, is not the giver as really ſo, as the receiver? And as there is danger, that the receiver will err one way, is there not danger, that the giver may err the other? Since it is not matter of arbitrary choice, which has no rule, but matter of real equity, to be conſidered as in the preſence of God, what proviſion ſhall be made for the poor? And therefor, though you are yourſelves the only

judges, what you will do in their behalf, for the caſe admits no other; yet let me tell you, you will not be impartial, you will not be equitable judges, until you have guarded againſt the influence, which intereſt is apt to have upon your judgment; and cultivated within you the ſpirit of charity to balance it. Then you will ſee the various remaining neceſſities which call for relief. But that there are many ſuch, muſt be evident at firſt ſight to the moſt careleſs obſerver, were it only from hence, that both this and the other hoſpitals are often obliged to reject poor objects which offer, even for want of room, or wards to contain them.

NOTWITHSTANDING many perſons have need of theſe admonitions, yet there is a good ſpirit of beneficence, as I obſerved, pretty generally prevailing. And I muſt congratulate you upon the great ſucceſs it has given to the particular good work before us; great I think beyond all example for the time it has ſubſiſted. Nor would it be unſuitable to the preſent occaſion, to recount the particulars of this ſucceſs. For the neceſſary accommodations which have been provided, and the numbers who

have been relieved, in ſo ſhort a time, cannot but give high reputation to the London Infirmary. And the reputation of any particular charity, like credit in trade, is ſo much real advantage, without the inconveniences to which that is ſometimes liable. It will bring in contributions for its ſupport; and men of character, as they ſhall be wanted, to aſſiſt in the management of it; men of ſkill in the profeſſions, men of conduct in buſineſs, to perpetuate, improve and bring it to perfection. So that you the contributors to this charity, and more eſpecially thoſe of you by whoſe immediate care and economy it is in ſo high repute, are encouraged to go on with *your labour of love**, not only by the preſent good, which you ſee is here done, but likewiſe by the proſpect of what will probably be done, by your means, in future times, when this infirmary ſhall become, as I hope it will, no leſs renowned, than the city in which it is eſtabliſhed.

But to ſee how far it is from being yet complete, for want of contributions, one need only look upon the ſettled rules of the houſe

* Heb. vi. 10.

for *admiſſion of patients*. See there the limitations which neceſſity preſcribes, as to the perſons to be admitted. Read but that one order, though others might be mentioned, that *none who are judged to be in an aſthmatic, conſumptive, or dying condition, be admitted on any account whatſoever*. Harſh as theſe words ſound, they proceed out of the mouth of charity herſelf. Charity pronounces it to be better, that poor creatures who might receive much eaſe and relief, ſhould be denied it, if their caſe does not admit of recovery, rather than that others, whoſe caſe does admit of it, be left to periſh. But it ſhocks humanity to hear ſuch an alternative mentioned; and to think, that there ſhould be a neceſſity, as there is at preſent, for ſuch reſtrictions, in one of the moſt beneficent and beſt managed ſchemes in the world. May more numerous or larger contributions, at length, open a door to ſuch as theſe; that what renders their caſe in the higheſt degree compaſſionable, their languiſhing under incurable diſeaſes, may no longer exclude them from the houſe of mercy!

But beſides the perſons to whom I have been now more particularly ſpeaking, there

are others, who do not caſt about for excuſes for not contributing to the relief of the neceſſitous; perhaps are rather diſpoſed to relieve them; who yet are not ſo careful as they ought to be, to put themſelves into a capacity of doing it. For we are as really accountable for not doing the good which we might have in our power to do, if we would manage our affairs with prudence, as we are for not doing the good which is in our power now at preſent. And hence ariſe the obligations of economy upon people in the higheſt, as well as in the lower ſtations of life, in order to enable themſelves to do that good, which, without economy, both of them muſt be incapable of; even though without it, they could anſwer the ſtrict demands of juſtice; and yet we find neither of them can. *A good man ſheweth favour and lendeth; and* to enable himſelf to do ſo, *he will guide his affairs with diſcretion* *. For want of this, many a one has reduced his family to the neceſity of aſking relief from thoſe public charities, to which he might have left them in a condition of largely contributing.

As economy is the duty of all perſons, with-

* Pſal. cxii. 5.

out exception, frugality and diligence are duties which particularly belong to the middle, as well as lower ranks of men; and more particularly ſtill to perſons in trade and commerce, whatever their fortunes be. For trade and commerce cannot otherwiſe be carried on, but is plainly inconſiſtent with idleneſs and profuſion: though indeed were it only from regard to propriety, and to avoid being abſurd, every one ſhould conform his behaviour to what his ſituation in life requires, without which the order of ſociety muſt be broken in upon. And conſidering how inherited riches, and a life of leiſure are often employed, the generality of mankind have cauſe to be thankful, that their ſtation exempts them from ſo great temptations; that it engages them in a ſober care of their expences, and in a courſe of application to buſineſs: eſpecially as theſe virtues, moreover, tend to give them, what is an excellent ground-work for all others, a ſtayed equality of temper and command of their paſſions. But when a man is diligent and frugal, in order to have it in his power to do good; when he is more induſtrious, or more ſparing, perhaps,

than his circumſtances neceſſarily require, that he may *have to give to him that needeth* *; when he *labours in order to ſupport the weak* †; ſuch care of his affairs is itſelf charity, and the actual beneficence which it enables him to practiſe, is additional charity.

You will eaſily ſee, why I inſiſt thus upon theſe things, becauſe I would particularly recommend the good work before us to all ranks of people in this great city. And I think I have reaſon to do ſo, from the conſideration, that it very particularly belongs to them to promote it. The goſpel indeed teaches us to look upon every one in diſtreſs as our neighbour; yet neighbourhood in the literal ſenſe, and likewiſe ſeveral other circumſtances, are providential recommendations of ſuch and ſuch charities and excitements to them; without which the neceſſitous would ſuffer much more than they do at preſent. For our general diſpoſition to beneficence would not be ſufficiently directed, and in other reſpects would be very ineffectual, if it were not called forth into action by ſome or other of thoſe providential circumſtances; which form particular relations

* Epheſ. iv. 28. † Acts xx. 35.

between the rich and the poor, and are of courſe regarded by every one in ſome degree. But though many perſons among you, both in the way of contributions, and in other ways no leſs uſeful, have done even more than was to be expected, yet, I muſt be allowed to ſay, that I do not think, the relation the inhabitants of this city bear to the perſons for whom our infirmary was principally deſigned, is ſufficiently attended to by the generality; which may be owing to its late eſtabliſhment. It is you know deſigned principally for *diſeaſed manufacturers, ſeamen in merchant-ſervice, and their wives and children:* and *poor manufacturers* comprehend all who are employed in any labour whatever belonging to trade and commerce. The deſcription of theſe objects ſhews their relation, and a very near one it is, to you my neighbours the inhabitants of this city. If any of your domeſtic ſervants were diſabled by ſickneſs, there is none of you but would think himſelf bound to do ſomewhat for their relief. Now theſe ſeamen and manufacturers are employed in your immediate buſineſs. They are ſervants of merchants, and other principal traders; as much your ſervants

as if they lived under your roof; though by their not doing ſo, the relation is leſs in ſight. And ſuppoſing they do not all depend upon traders of lower rank, in exactly the ſame manner, yet many of them do; and they have all connections with you, which gave them a claim to your charity preferably to ſtrangers. They are indeed ſervants of the public; and ſo are all induſtrious poor people, as well as they. But that does not hinder the latter from being more immediately yours. And as their being ſervants to the public, is a general recommendation of this charity to all other perſons, ſo their being more immediately yours, is, ſurely, a particular recommendation of it to you. Notwithſtanding all this, I will not take upon me to ſay, that every one of you is blameable who does not contribute to your infirmary, for yours it is in a peculiar ſenſe: but I will ſay, that thoſe of you who do, are highly commendable. I will ſay more, that you promote a very excellent work, which your particular ſtation is a providential call upon you to promote. And there can be no ſtronger reaſon than this for doing any thing, except the one reaſon, that it would be criminal to omit it.

THESE conſiderations, methinks, might induce every trader of higher rank in this city, to become a ſubſcriber to the infirmary which is named from it; and others of you, to contribute ſomewhat yearly to it, in the way in which ſmaller contributions are given. This would be a moſt proper offering out of your increaſe to Him, whoſe *bleſſing maketh rich* *. Let it be more or leſs, *Every man according as he purpoſeth in his heart; not grudgingly, or of neceſſity, for God loveth a chearful giver* †.

THE large benefactions of ſome perſons of ability, may be neceſſary in the firſt eſtabliſhment of a public charity, and are greatly uſeful afterwards in maintaining it: but the expences of this before us, in the extent and degree of perfection to which one would hope it might be brought, cannot be effectually ſupported, any more than the expences of civil government, without the contribution of great numbers. You have already the aſſiſtance of perſons of higheſt rank and fortune, of which the liſt of our governors, and the preſent appearance, are illuſtrious examples. And their aſſiſtance would be far from leſſening by a ge-

* Prov. x. 22. † 2 Cor. ix. 7.

neral contribution to it amongſt yourſelves. On the contrary, the general contribution to it amongſt yourſelves which I have been propoſing, would give it ſtill higher repute, and more invite ſuch perſons to continue their aſſiſtance, and accept the honour of being in its direction. For the greateſt perſons receive honour from taking the direction of a good work, as they likewiſe give honour to it. And by theſe concurrent endeavours, our infirmary might at length be brought to anſwer, in ſome competent meaſure, to the occaſions of our city.

Blessrd are they who employ their riches in promoting ſo excellent a deſign. The temporal advantages of them are far from coming up, in enjoyment, to what they promiſe at a diſtance. But the diſtinguiſhed privilege, the prerogative of riches is, that they increaſe our power of doing good. This is their proper uſe. In proportion men make this uſe of them, they imitate Almighty God; and co-operate together with him in promoting the happineſs of the world; and may expect the moſt favourable judgment, which their caſe will admit of at the laſt day, upon the general re-

peated maxim of the goſpel, that we ſhall then be treated ourſelves as we now treat others. They have moreover the prayers of all good men, thoſe of them particularly whom they have befriended; and by ſuch exerciſe of charity, they improve within themſelves the temper of it, which is the very temper of heaven. Conſider next the peculiar force with which this branch of charity, almſgiving, is recommended to us in theſe words, *He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord**: and in theſe of our Saviour; *Verily I ſay unto you, In as much as ye have done it*, relieved the ſick and needy, *unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me*†. Beware you do not explain away theſe paſſages of ſcripture, under the notion, that they have been made to ſerve ſuperſtitious purpoſes: but ponder them fairly in your heart; and you will feel them to be of irreſiſtible weight. Laſtly, let us remember, in how many inſtances we have all left undone thoſe things which we ought to have done, and done thoſe things which we ought not to have done. Now whoever has a ſerious ſenſe of this, will moſt

* Prov. xix. 17. † Matth. xxv. 40.

earneſtly deſire to ſupply the good, which he was obliged to have done, but has not, and undo the evil which he has done, or neglected to prevent: and when that is impracticable, to make amends, in ſome other way for his offences—I can mean only to our fellow-creatures. To make amends, in ſome way or other, to a particular perſon, againſt whom we have offended, either by poſitive injury or by neglect; is an expreſs condition of our obtaining forgiveneſs of God, when it is in our power to make it. And when it is not, ſurely the next beſt thing is to make amends to ſociety by fervent charity, in a courſe of doing good; which riches, as I obſerved, put very much within our power.

How unhappy a choice then do thoſe rich men make, who ſacrifice all theſe high prerogatives of their ſtate, to the wretched purpoſes of diſſoluteneſs and vanity, or to the ſordid itch of heaping up, to no purpoſe at all; whilſt in the mean time they ſtand charged with the important truſt, in which they are thus unfaithful, and of which a ſtrict account remains to be given!

THE END.

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